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Needs of Home Education Parents

by

Ruth Clendening

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Department of Educational Administration

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1996

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This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory
of my husband, Jack. It was his wish that
motivated the completion of this project.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify (a) the needs of parents who home-educate their children and the expectations that they have of school boards in assisting them with the delivery of their programs, and (b) the role that school boards took in assisting parents with the delivery of home education programs.

Data were collected from questionnaires, interviews, and documents. Questionnaires were completed by 119 parents who voluntarily chose to share information about their home education programs and practices. Interviews were conducted with six members from two school districts who were purposively selected to include two members from each level of responsibility to home educators within their jurisdiction. Documents were used to support and supplement the data collected.

The findings indicate that parents chose to home-educate their children in order to influence the children's moral environment, to make better use of the time spent on learning, to allow their children to develop better self-concepts, and to avoid negative influence of others on their children. The findings also indicate that parents were able to identify their most immediate needs: to have their children's progress monitored according to their own standards, to have the opportunity to attend local workshops to enhance teaching methods in home settings, to have access to curriculum materials and learning resources, and to receive financial assistance for the purchase of resources.

Administrators interviewed in this study agreed that their roles with respect to home educators were to ensure that provincial regulations were followed, support personnel were available, and financial resources were provided to supplement the cost of materials. In addition, the assessment of

students, collaboration with parents, and the creation of a greater public awareness were seen as important roles for school districts to explore.

A number of implications were drawn from the study which could inform practitioners in the field of home education practices as well as assist in directing further research in this area of study.

Research is warranted in the area of collaboration and consensus of the vested stakeholders regarding the evaluation and assessment of home education students. Further exploration of the needs of home educators might assist school boards in defining their roles for assisting parents with the access and availability of resources, facilities, and curriculum support; and in encouraging other educators to support parents in the task of home-educating their children.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

An increasing number of parents in Alberta are opting to educate their children at home. It is difficult to obtain an exact number of the children involved in the *home education* phenomenon; however, the Grants Planning and Administration Branch of Alberta Education (1994a) reported that over 6,122 students were being educated at home. It was reported that the number of students registered in home education programs in Grades 1-9 was relatively consistent throughout the province; registrations numbered between 450 and 640 for each of the elementary grades. The numbers dropped significantly for students at senior high school Grades 11 and 12, with registrations at 350 or less. Alberta Education (1994b) stated in the *Home Education Regulation: Information Package* that these students represented "less than 1% of the total student population" (p. iv). Although this number is relatively small compared to the total school population, it has continued to increase at the rate of 35% each year over the last decade.

One of the current problems facing parents of children in home education programs is the selection of a program of studies for their children. According to the *Home Education Survey* by Alberta Education (1992, p. 4), at least 35% of the home educating parents had chosen Alberta Distance Learning (ADL) programs as their base for fulfilling the requirements of the approved Alberta curriculum of studies. However, school jurisdictions from across the province reported in the survey that an increasing number of parents were developing their own programs or were using a combination of many other programs.

Other concerns of parents related to issues of funding and the question of access to resources and facilities required as supplements for their home education programs. In most jurisdictions there was limited financial support for parents using ADL programs, although there was generous access to school libraries and facilities upon request; however, financial support to parents varied from district to district within the province. According to Appendix B of the *Home Education Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b), financial support for home educators varies greatly across the country. Several provinces in Eastern Canada provide no financial support to districts or home educating families. The availability of materials and services and access to resources for home educators within each province are also outlined in this document. The information indicated that school districts provide a variety of materials, services, and resources at their discretion.

An additional concern for home educating parents and school officials alike related to the monitoring and assessment of home education programs. The *Home Education Regulation* issued by Alberta Education (1994b) outlined the recommendations for parents and school districts to follow in order to meet provincial education standards for all grades. The regulations included strict guidelines for Provincial Achievement Testing procedures for all students being educated at home.

Studies on home education have been carried out in Canada and the United States over the past two decades by numerous researchers (Bendell, 1987; Frost, 1988; Moore, 1984; Priesnitz & Priesnitz, 1990; Van Galen & Pitman, 1991). As the philosophy surrounding home education practices has evolved, many changes have taken place that impact home educators, and this points strongly to the need for further study in this area. The study described in this dissertation was undertaken in order to understand the

needs of home educators, to understand their reasons for choosing to home-educate their children, and to identify ways in which school districts might assist home educators.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived needs of parents who are home-educating their children. The study was also designed to identify the role that school boards had played in assisting parents with the delivery of home education programs and, in turn, the role that home educators expected school jurisdictions to take in assisting them with the delivery of their home education programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the profile of participation in home education?
2. What kinds of programs do home education families use?
3. What are the reasons why families choose home education?
4. What do home educators identify as needs associated with their home education program?
5. What is the nature of the services and resources currently provided to home educators by school districts?

With respect to district personnel involved in home education, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How is home education organized in school districts?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between home educators and school district personnel?

3. What are the key indicators of a successful home education program?

4. What are the challenges surrounding a home education program?

5. How should home education students be assessed?

Significance of the Study

Home education is relatively new to Alberta. Provincial legislation treats home-based education as an alternative to public schools rather than as an exemption from attendance at public schools. The underlying premise is that education is compulsory as opposed to attendance in a public school being compulsory.

Many changes to home education policies followed the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *Jones v. the Queen* (1986; cited in Alberta Education, 1994b). The essence of the decision was that "parents have a right to choose the education of their children consistent with the family's religious and conscientiously held beliefs" (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. iii).

Several articles appeared in newspapers and professional magazines reporting the increase in the number of parents who are choosing home schooling as an alternative approach to educating their children. Nikiforuk (1994) stated that although there were no national statistics to document the trend, home education groups and ministries of education reported a rising interest in home schooling. Priesnitz and Priesnitz (1990) stated in a report based on the study of 500 Canadian home-based education families that parents were literally taking their children's education into their own hands. Gray-Grant (1993) reported that home schoolers in Canada numbered between 20,000 and 25,000.

Recognizing parents' rights to choose home education, the Alberta School Act of 1988 made the registration of home education students with a school district compulsory. This amendment made it possible to record the actual number of children involved in home education programs in the province. Although accurate records of the actual number of home education students in the province of Alberta were not available in the early 1980s, the *Home Education Survey* by Alberta Education (1992) recorded that there were 55 children registered in the 1984-85 school year. The number of students reported increased each year until Alberta Education received reports from 140 school districts in September 1992 that 3,600 students were registered. In 1993, 4,650 were registered, and a total of 6,122 students were reported to be registered when the Grants Planning and Administrative Branch of Alberta Education (1994b) compiled the results of the enrolment survey. It is difficult to project the impact that these numbers will have on educational policy; however, Mayberry (1989) stated that

> if the impact on public schools is significant, educational administrators will have to respond by initiating policies that either facilitate cooperation between home school families and public schools or restrict the right of home school families to seek an alternative method of education for their children. (p. 178)

Prior to September 1994, provincial legislation in Alberta did not distinguish home-based education from school-based education, because boards of education received full grant recognition for both. The School Foundation Program Fund (SFPF) grant provided an instructional grant for each child registered in a home education program. This fund allocated $2,161 to each elementary student, $2,324 to every junior high student, and $2,506 to every high school student registered as a home education student (Appendix B; Alberta Education, 1994b). The basic per-student

grant to all school districts in the province was reduced by over 50% when the new regulations for home educators were implemented in the fall of 1994, which meant that school districts would now receive $969 for each elementary student, $1,042 for junior high students, and $1,124 for senior high students. This new regulation also required the supervising board or private school to pay 50% of the allocated education grant money to the parents of the home-schooled child (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 14). Information provided in the *Home Education Guide* (Perrin, 1993) indicated that when parents chose to work with a willing nonresident board, the provincial grant was given to the willing nonresident board rather than to the resident board; therefore, the allocation of funds became a major issue for school jurisdictions involved with home educators.

Many educators within the traditional school setting are reluctant to accept the idea that home education should be a legitimate choice for parents. They have a tendency to pay lip service to the policies that are in place for home educators and hesitate to follow the rules and regulations outlined by the province or the local school jurisdiction that hold them accountable for the success of the program. Parents have voiced their opinions; they want to be involved with their children's education; they are willing to assume the responsibility for 'home schooling,' especially when the traditional school has not facilitated or encouraged their involvement in the educational process.

If home educators are to be successful in achieving their goals, they will require the support of educators, administrators, and school boards. Knowles (1988) confirmed this thought: "Public school administrators need to be cognizant of the value of accommodating home school parents and students by acknowledging the effects of their past experiences, dispelling

their fears, and by treating them as partners in the educational process" (p. 82). Consequently, parents who choose to home-educate their children will have to be more articulate in expressing their needs so that cooperating school districts can assess how best to work with them in achieving positive results.

Holt (1983) discussed the need for policies which would encourage parental participation in the educational process and which would allow part-time participation of home-educated students in the regular school. He saw the importance of building partnerships between homes and schools as a beneficial arrangement for meeting the educational needs of some children. Holt indicated that collaboration of this nature could help parents to feel less inclined to ignore public education and more inclined to work toward achieving changes in the public system that could better serve the educational needs of children. Other researchers (Mayberry, 1991; Mirochnik & McIntire, 1991; Ramsay, 1992; Rich, 1987; Sheffer, 1989) also emphasized the value of cooperation between home educators and school administrators in establishing a climate of mutual respect, benefit, and trust.

Another significant concern that has emerged from the phenomenon of home education relates to the shifting roles of families and schools in the education process. In the past, some parents have wanted schools to train their children in the basic skills and attitudes, and may not have fully realized that this entailed a loss of authority and control over the child's education. An increasing number of parents became more disillusioned with the way in which their young were being molded within the formal educational institutions. The disillusionment led to a re-emphasis on "family values"; the locus of control returned to the parent as the home education movement

became an alternative form of education. Klicka (1992) stated: "I am convinced that the conflict with home schoolers has nothing to do with education. It is apparent that the real issue involves who has the authority to mandate how the children must be educated" (p. 230).

The manner in which home educators instruct their children is a major concern to educators at the provincial, school district, and school administrative levels. Knowles (1988) stated:

> Recognizing the limitations of parents' teaching methods may be an important motivation to consider for implementing appropriate parent-teacher training that recognizes the unique perceptions and orientations of families without removing the autonomy that the parents desire. (p. 82)

Home educators who are members of the Home Education Network within the province of Alberta have been concerned with acquiring and updating their teaching skills. They have arranged specific meetings for the purpose of sharing materials and techniques for teaching their youngsters. They have also organized an annual convention for home educators in the province wherein they share ideas, new curricula, and teaching methods, and provide general support to one another.

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be useful in providing information for school jurisdictions regarding the nature of home education practices and in articulating the needs of home educators. Results will provide insight into the religious, political, social, and practical reasons that parents are exercising their rights to choose home education for their children. The study also provides insights into the nature of the collaboration required of school districts and parents in order to guarantee the success of home education programs. The recommendations of this study will provide insight for school jurisdictions to assess the needs and expectations of parents who are accepting the challenge to home-educate

their children. Some aspects of the recommendations warrant in-depth consideration from other stakeholders.

Definition of Key Terms

Home education: An education program offered to a student by a parent outside the structured learning environment of a "school." The terms *home schooling* and *home education* may be used interchangeably, even though the more acceptable term is *home education.*

Resident board: The board of the district or division in which the student resides.

Willing nonresident board: A board of a school district in which the student is not a resident that has expressed a willingness to supervise a home education program for the student.

Home education program plan: A plan developed by the parent with the assistance of the home education monitor or facilitator which establishes learner objectives and expectations. Included in the plan are assessment and supervision procedures as required in the *Home Education Program Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b), as well as the resources and facilities to be used or provided to the student by the school district.

Home education monitor or facilitator: A certificated teacher who provides program supervision and assessment of student achievement for home education students on behalf of the Board of Education.

Supervision: The act of ensuring that the guidelines and regulations of home education are adhered to by the parent/guardian of the child being educated at home.

Assessment: Diagnostic procedures and/or tools which assist the parents and the home education monitor to determine whether reasonable student learning progress has taken place.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. that the parent questionnaire and individual interviews addressed the major concerns of home educators;

2. that the study participants were able to understand the items on the survey instrument in the sense intended by the researcher; and

3. that all responses were honest, sincere, and accurate indicators of the participants' perceptions of home education programs.

Researcher Bias

The researcher was a teacher in one of the school jurisdictions involved in this study at the time of the collection of data. Care was taken to ensure that the researcher did not bias the study or the results of the study by imposing her own ideas about home education philosophy or practice on the participants. The researcher was attentive to personal bias by frequent consultation with individuals both inside and outside the researcher's home-school jurisdiction as well as with parents who home-educate in other school districts within the province of Alberta.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study, a statement of the research problem, a presentation of the research questions used to guide the study, a discussion of the significance of the study, and a presentation of

the key definitions used. The chapter also includes a discussion of the underlying assumptions of the study and comments on researcher bias.

Chapter 2 is an examination of the literature relevant to this topic. The literature review includes a discussion of the impact of parental involvement in education, as well as its impact on student achievement and a historical perspective of the development of home education programs. Literature dealing with the nature of home education practices is also included in the historical review of home education.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodology used in the study. It outlines the procedure for data collection and analysis and identifies the ethical considerations applied to the study. The development of the parent questionnaire is discussed, as well as the validity and reliability of the instrument for this study. A presentation of the methodological assumptions, delimitations, and limitations is included.

Chapter 4 presents the data obtained from the parent-questionnaire portion of the study. The data results are presented in accordance with the five research questions used to guide this portion of the study.

Chapter 5 reports the data obtained from the interview portion of the study. The discussion focuses on the responses of the six participants and is organized into the five research questions used to guide this portion of the study.

Chapter 6 presents a summary of the design of the study and a review of the major findings from Chapters 4 and 5. It presents the conclusions of the study, as well as recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review includes three major sections. The first section deals with current research on the impact of parental involvement in education; it also considers the impact that parental involvement has on student achievement in the more traditional school setting. The second section provides a historical perspective of the development of home education programs in the province of Alberta. The final section discusses the nature of home education programs and the collaborative approach that parents, school districts, and the board of education might envisage for the future of home education practices.

Parental Involvement in Education

"Today's parents increasingly desire a voice in the educational process. Legislators and state and local school officials need to view parents as legitimate partners in their children's education" (Nardine & Morris, 1991, p. 366). The issue of parental involvement has been questioned by many; Topping (1986) stated that the main drawback to such cooperation was that it might lead to criticism of the teacher in the home (p. 15). He also stated:

> The roots of parental involvement in schools can be traced back to the early nineteenth century [Adult Learning Potential Institute (ALPI), 1980] in the USA. Relevant initiatives were documented with some certainty. This development seems to have withstood social pressures resulting from a state of flux in the child-rearing practices advocated by the 'experts.' (p. 15)

When parents are involved in their children's schooling, children do better in school, and schools become better. Both families and schools want the best

for children; they want to help them learn (Davies, 1991), grow, and develop into educated, responsible, and caring adults. Davies stated:

> Since most families want to help their children learn and since family help is a positive factor in children's learning, schools should reach out to families in homes and neighbourhood settings to provide information, materials, and guidance to that large constituency that does not come to school. (p. 379)

Because they share the same basic goals, it seems obvious that parents and educators should be working together (Henderson, 1986; cited in Nardine & Morris, 1991, p. 366). Henderson believed that educational administrators have played a limited role in the parent-involvement movement and that they seem not to have advanced much beyond the concept of 'bake sale' parent involvement.

Dickson (1989) of the Calgary Board of Education researched the topic of *Growth and Development: Expectations for Calgary Board of Education Mission Fulfillment.* The document that was published for the Calgary Board of Education stated the following:

> Research demonstrates that both the home and the school have a profound effect on the child, and that the home and school working in close harmony create a better learning climate than that which occurs when the home and school work as separate entities. When parents are constructively involved in their children's schooling, the children's learning is enhanced. (p. 5)

Bloom (1981) also researched the effect of the home environment on student achievement and development. Home environmental processes which appeared to be the most significant for student achievement were the development of the mother tongue and language patterns, the encouragement of the child to learn well, the aspirations of the parents for their child, the provision of help in learning when the child most needed it, and the ways in which time and space were organized in the home. It is

evident from Bloom's research that the home environment affects the academic achievement of a child (pp. 9-14).

Ray (1990) directed a study commissioned by the National Center for Home Education in Paeonian Springs, Virginia, that explored the academic-achievement outcomes of students educated at home. The results indicated that students who took the standardized achievement test scored, on the average, at or above the 80th percentile in all the major subject areas. The national average for students in conventional schools was at the 50th percentile level (p. 5).

Parents who are involved in the education of their children spend a considerable amount of time working with teachers and other parents in the community environment of the school. In many school settings a strong relationship exists between parents and the school. Frost and Morris (1988) researched the importance of parents working with schools in creating a positive environment for the academic success of home-educated individuals. They stated:

> To date the dialogue between advocates of home schooling and public officials has taken the form of debate and mutual criticism. By building a relationship based on trust and cooperation between the home and the local school, all parties involved, student, parent, and educator, can help create an optimal educational environment. (p. 227)

Frost and Morris (1988) used the results of three studies of Midwest American states as the basis for the following insights about home schooling:

1. The home schooling setting must be recognized as a viable alternative for achieving the traditional school-related academic goals.
2. Public school administrators need to cooperate wholeheartedly and help home-schooled children and parents.
3. A new emphasis on designing and improving instructional methods for home-schoolers needs to be encouraged. (p. 226)

Partnerships between parents and teachers support the child in the learning process. "Sharing responsibility for children's learning and development can reduce the burden, the isolation, and the stress felt by so many hard-working and dedicated school professionals today" (Davies, 1991, p. 382). Shared responsibility involves a number of roles which include parents as supporters and encouragers; parents engaged in parenting; parents as advisors, collaborators, problem solvers; parents as volunteers; parents as audience; parents as teachers; and parents as providers and protector (p. 377).

Chrispeels (1991) looked at the policies and actions of San Diego school districts which mandated parent involvement in their schools. She stated:

> The California State Board of Education adopted a policy on parent involvement in January 1989. The policy guided the efforts of the state department of education and local districts to strengthen family/school partnerships. The policy called for programs and actions that helped parents develop parenting skills, gave them information on how to foster their children's learning, how to use community resources to support families and students, how to promote two-way communication between home and school, how to involve parents at school as volunteers in both instructional and support activities, and how to involve parents in school governance and in advocacy roles. (p. 368)

By placing a high priority on learning, parents encourage and support their children. "As the first teachers of their children, parents have the primary responsibility for children's learning" (Warner, 1991, p. 373). The school and its staff must value and support parents in this role; they are able to endorse, encourage, and enhance the role of parenting as a responsible and valued one. "Teachers and administrators have an obligation to help parents carry out their natural roles as models for and helpers of their own children" (p. 373).

In the more traditional school environment, the relationship between parents and school personnel is viewed as a reciprocal relationship. "Working together, schools and families can improve student achievement, attendance, and behavior" (Warner, 1991, p. 373). Parents stimulate and reinforce the learning of their child through modelling, collaboration, and engagement in successful learning and teaching strategies (p. 373). Parents work with the school in a variety of volunteer roles. They are seen in the school observing, supporting, and acknowledging their children's progress. Parents are generally welcomed into the school by students and staff and are encouraged to take an active role in the education of their children.

Because "parents are the child's prime teachers" (Warner, 1991, p. 373), they can reinforce the school curriculum. They have the opportunity to act in an advisory capacity in areas of school-based programs. Both parents and school staff foster awareness of different opinions regarding educational objectives and practices and continually enhance positive, two-way communication between the home and the school.

Parents and school staff are generally considered to be advocates for children. Parents provide for and protect their children. Parents and staff share interests, involvement, and responsibility in providing for the basic needs of children, including the protection of their well-being. It is important that a mutual relationship exist between parents and schools and equally important that a mutual relationship exist between a community and its schools. "By building a relationship based on trust and cooperation between the home and local school, all parties involved, student, parent, and educator can help create an optimal educational environment" (Frost & Morris, 1988, p. 227). By drawing upon the expertise and resources

contained within a community, the school serves as a valued partner, helping the community to meet its unique needs. Through collaboration and planning, communities, schools, and parents share responsibility for each other's well-being, whether the educational setting be the home or the school (D'Angelo & Adler, 1991, pp. 350-354).

Most parents are interested in their children's education. Priesnitz (1987) stated: "Parents know their children better than anyone else and have a rapport with them that no one else may have" (p. 4). Many parents who place a high priority on learning become actively involved in the learning and teaching processes. Elementary schools have come to expect that parents show an interest in school life. Schools expect that parents will model appropriate behavior, build self-esteem in their children, assist in the building of responsibility and mutual respect, and offer support for school-based learning. Because each community is unique, parental involvement in the school will vary. Parental involvement in the schools can be thought of as existing on a continuum ranging from clerical assistance to being partners in learning and teaching, and from attending meetings to serving as members or leaders of the School Advisory Council. According to the Cyster et al. (1979) study of parental involvement in the UK, the most frequent type of parental involvement included parents assisting with school visits and outings (78%).

In Illinois, Urban Education Partnership Grants were established to fund projects that served the dual purpose of school improvement and stimulating parent involvement. Chapman (1991) provided the following reasons for the development of this program:

> Because the needs of today's students have become so complex that they are outstripping the services of the agencies and schools that were created to serve them, collaborative partnerships must

> be established that involve schools, families, businesses, social service agencies, and other groups in an effort to coordinate resources, solve problems, and provide more chances for student success. (pp. 355-356)

Chapman also felt that schools should be encouraged to communicate and cooperate with parents and with institutions in the private sector that are concerned with a well-educated citizenry (p. 356). Many parents act as educational collaborators, stimulating and reinforcing school learning through the assistance that they provide at home. It would follow that open and continuous communication with parents on a variety of issues is an important step in maintaining an atmosphere of collaboration within the school environment.

Planning for parental involvement to promote the success of children in school is a long and difficult process. Epstein (1991) asserted that "although most schools embrace the concepts of partnership and parental involvement, few have translated their beliefs into plans or their plans into action" (p. 345). Epstein also suggested that a shared vision and concerted effort would yield a variety of effective programs to connect schools, families, and communities (p. 349). Epstein (1987; cited in Chapman, 1991, p. 357) documented the importance for state departments to foster meaningful parent involvement programs in schools through the provision of both financial and technical support. Chapman discussed the experience of the Illinois State Board of Education regarding parent involvement. The state wanted to emphasize the quality of family connections with the school. As a result of this state emphasis, Illinois staff were encouraged to take into account the five elements of Epstein's model of parent involvement:

- basic obligations of families, including health, safety, and a positive home environment;
- basic obligations of schools, including communicating with parents regarding their child's programs and progress;

- parent involvement at school, including volunteer activities and support for sports, student performances, and other activities;
- parent involvement in learning activities at home, including supervising homework; . . . and
- parent involvement in governance, decision making, and advocacy . . . in various advisory roles. (p. 357)

Epstein stressed the concept of overlapping responsibilities and influences of the stakeholders involved. Epstein also documented the importance of state departments providing both technical and financial support to schools in order that the latter might develop meaningful programs that encourage and support parental involvement.

Warner (1991) reiterated the idea that parents wanted to be involved and especially wanted to be kept informed about the progress of their children. Indianapolis Public School (IPS) established a program for parental involvement under the umbrella of "Parents in Touch." The goal of this program was to facilitate two-way communication that allowed parents to maintain contact with the school and to become partners with educators in the education of their children. In summary, the IPS believed that substantive collaboration between administrators, parents, and teachers would best meet the academic and developmental needs of students. In essence, if children are to learn, parental involvement will help to make learning happen (pp. 372-375).

Parents and teachers generally share a common goal for children in that they both want children to lead responsible and productive lives and to achieve a relative degree of success from their input into the educational process. The more the parent is linked to the teacher, the greater the possibility that "good consensus between settings and an evolving power in favor of the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 212) will be developed. It would then follow that parent and teacher expectations might

correspond more closely and this consensus might be viewed as a positive and supportive action from the student's perspective. As Bronfenbrenner suggested, the key to enhancing the effectiveness of public education has to do with the interconnectedness of the school with the family (p. 212).

Research on parent involvement has shown consistently that parents can make a difference in the quality of their children's education if districts and schools enable them to become involved in education in a variety of ways (Solomon, 1991, p. 360). The teacher who recognizes the importance of this involvement will provide "thoughtful, coordinated plans and systematic actions to integrate parent involvement into school and classroom programs" (p. 360). Other researchers indicated that this type of leadership on the part of the teacher helped to blend the community of parents into the child's learning experiences. Nardine and Morris (1991) stated that "if we believe that parents can make an invaluable, sustained contribution to their children's education, then the educational leaders of our states need to give parent involvement a much higher priority" (p. 366).

Goodlad's (1984) contention was that meaningful involvement, not control, was the issue for parents. Goodlad reported: "Polls and surveys show that parents would like a greater say in the affairs of their schools. But this does not mean that parents want to take over the schools. . . . Rather, they want to be kept informed in as clear a fashion as possible" (p. 273).

It is often difficult to get parents involved in the education of their children, especially as those children reach their junior high and high school years. A study by Johnson and Ransom (1980; cited in Topping, 1986, p. 33) on parental perceptions at secondary levels of education indicated that parents reported that adolescents needed to feel more independent and

free from parental interference. It was important for parents to know that their involvement made a tremendous difference in the performance of their child at school. Johnson and Ransom stated that teaching parents how to become involved in the education of their children could take many forms; for example, home tutoring, volunteer assistance in the classroom, participating in parent-teacher-child conferences, becoming involved in the support of the instructional program, and helping parents to understand the complexity of children with mild to severe learning disabilities (p. 34).

Society in general and educators specifically are more aware today of the conditions in which children live and function. "There is evidence that where schools apply themselves methodically to developing parental involvement, good results are possible even in disadvantaged areas; . . . however, many schools confine parental involvement to low-level menial tasks" (Topping, 1986, p. 36). Even though educators feel that parental involvement in the education of their children is important, there is some concern as to where and how parental involvement would best be accessed.

Bendell (1987) questioned the degree to which educators value the involvement of parents: "In these days when parental involvement is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential factors in a child's education, it is only a token acknowledgement where schools are concerned" (p. 60). Parental involvement has been known to assume many different forms, from the total involvement evident in home schooling programs to minimal involvement in parent-teacher-child liaison through the school or early-intervention programs.

Another researcher, Davies (1991), focused on working towards the development of new definitions and practices of parental involvement in schools. As President of the Institute for Responsive Education in Boston,

Davies agreed that parental involvement could make a valuable contribution to the success of children's experiences at school. He stated that the following three themes were of central importance to children: "providing success for all children, . . . serving the whole child, . . . [and] sharing responsibility" (p. 377). Davies also stated: "In order to promote the social and academic development of children, the key institutions must change their practices and their relationships with one another" (p. 377). Davies continued to elaborate on strategies for schools to move in the direction of partnership with parents. He suggested that creating a parent center, setting up a home-visitor support system, and establishing an action-research team of teachers would encourage parental involvement. The parent center would attract parents to the school, the home-visitor program would reach families that might not be reached otherwise, and the action-research team would be a way for teachers to improve curriculum and instruction through a collaborative effort with parents and other existing community resources (pp. 377-379). Davies concluded: "The assumption is that bringing parents and teachers together to study problems of home/school relations will be beneficial to a school's overall plan of shared responsibility" (p. 380).

Sandfort (1987) stated: "Schools in which parents are partners stand in stark contrast to those in which the school assumes sole responsibility for the student learning, or the school in which parents serve as volunteers only" (p.101).

Contrary to many researchers in this field, Gleadow (1991) felt that the principal, parents, and educators within a particular school should be allowed to reach consensus on the direction that their parent advisory group would take with regard to parental involvement. He stated:

> There is no need, nor is it desirable, to have a detailed set of district-wide prescriptive statements defining roles and responsibilities which make the assumption that there is homogeneity across schools. At most, district policy should facilitate the formation of PAGs [Parent Advisory Groups]. (p. 13)

Gleadow believed that building and maintaining a healthy climate through active parent-teacher participation would encourage sound educational programs in the school. "Education is seen as a joint responsibility of the community . . . and the school" (p. 12). Davies (1991) agreed that "sharing responsibility for children's learning and development can reduce the burden, the isolation, and the stress felt by so many hard-working and dedicated professionals today" (p. 382). The teacher is the adult presence in the classroom who establishes the rigor and sets the standards and expectations for that classroom. It is the teacher who has a special knowledge of the different styles of learning. This formal and personal knowledge about teaching and learning enables the teacher to develop a vision for each student. Sharing the vision and responsibility with parents and the community helps to realize a more ideal philosophy of education (pp. 380-382), which is captured in an old African proverb: "It takes the whole village to educate the child."

Chrispeels (1991) stated that even though efforts to mandate parental involvement in the County of San Diego Schools failed to affect the achievement of students, it was necessary to continue to set initiatives to work towards the goal of higher student achievement. Chrispeels indicated that even though mandated policies may not bring about a change in beliefs, they can serve several useful functions:

> First, policies create an institutionally sanctioned framework to guide practice by determining, for example, what type of parental involvement activities should have priority. Second, policies express "official" beliefs that can, over time, influence the beliefs of others. Third, policies supported by effective strategies for

> implementation can apply pressure for change by recognizing, supporting, and rewarding specific attitudes and behaviors. (p. 368)

Chrispeels acknowledged that school districts in the state of California were constantly increasing their efforts to reach out to build partnerships with parents in the hope that it would have an impact on the achievement of students (p. 369).

D'Angelo and Adler (1991) researched the value of introducing the successful strategies of Chapter 1 programs into schools and districts in an effort to improve communications with families that other schools had considered as "hard-to-reach families." According to D'Angelo and Adler, Chapter 1 programs across the United States worked hard to communicate with families and to build partnerships between home and school. The three types of communication strategies that Adler and D'Angelo suggested as the most successful in removing barriers between the school and the home were "written communications, face-to-face contact, and using technological devices such as videotapes and the telephone" (pp. 350-351). They concluded that successful involvement with parents occurred when the following events took place:

> [School systems] fine-tuned their communication to respond to the qualities, characteristics, and needs of the parents. . . . This has meant creating, selecting, pilot testing, evaluating, revising, and fine-tuning practices many times until acceptable levels of communication are achieved. (p. 350)

Adler and D'Angelo saw Chapter 1 programs as a catalyst for improving parent involvement.

As an administrator of Parenting and Community Education, Curriculum Services in Sacramento, Solomon (1991) observed that California's policy on parent involvement enabled districts and schools to develop appropriate programs that supported the primary goal of improving student learning.

Solomon stated: "Research has shown clearly that successful students tend to receive long-term support from parents and other adults at home as well as strong support from teachers and others at school" (p. 359). More than casual support is required to bring about student improvement; carefully coordinated plans and systematic actions are required to integrate parental involvement into classroom programs at schools and at home. Solomon believed that leadership from the school would enable parents to support their child's progress, both socially and academically. Policies initiated by the schools must be sensitive to the diverse attitudes, cultural differences, skill levels, and individual needs of families (pp. 359-362). Solomon stated:

> The most successful policies . . . will emphasize helping parents promote student learning at home and in school and helping teachers help parents to understand what their children are learning in each curriculum area at each grade level. . . . Any *school* can be more successful if parents are productively involved in their children's education. Any *student* can be more successful if schools link comprehensive parent involvement programs to curricula and to teaching and learning. (p. 362).

In dozens of school systems throughout the USA, evidence is growing that extra care in fashioning and maintaining channels of communication between schools and families is paying off (Chrispeels, 1988; cited in D'Angelo & Adler, 1991, p. 350). Researchers who have looked at the value of parental involvement generally have agreed that a child's education is the joint responsibility of the family and the school and that parents can make a difference in the quality of their child's learning by becoming actively involved from an early age (Davies, 1991; Epstein, 1987; cited in Chapman, 1991; Epstein, 1991; Solomon, 1991; Warner, 1991). Other areas of a child's development are also impacted through parental guidance and involvement. Fantini (cited in Topping, 1986) "reviews evidence on the effects on academic achievement of different kinds of parental involvement

in school. He concludes that parental involvement in instruction has been shown to improve pupil achievement, while involvement in school governance enhances pupil self-image" (p. 33) rather than purely academic achievement.

In their study conducted at the Center of Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia, Corcoran and Wilson (1987) stated: "Parents want their children to attend good schools. . . . Although exemplary schools share many traits, they are far from identical" (pp. 1-2). The 571 exemplary public secondary schools in the study had been previously cited for excellence; they exhibited the following eight characteristics: (a) They had good principals, (b) they had good teachers, (c) teachers were rewarded and recognized, (d) student-teacher relationships were good, (e) expectations were high, (f) problem-solving strategies were used, (g) parent and community involvement were good, and (h) there was community consensus on school goals. These characteristics were cited in a report on *Good Secondary Schools: What Makes Them Tick?* Of particular interest in this document was "parent and community involvement." The report indicated that educators often remarked that it was difficult to get parents involved, especially at the junior and senior high levels. The report also stated that the opposite was true for good schools because good schools did not wait for the community to come to them; they went to the community by recruiting volunteers to help plan special school activities, working with parents to develop aggressive public relations campaigns that would tell the school's story to the community, turning to the community for help in times of crisis, and seeking the support of community businesses for student athletic programs and academic activities. The good schools did not just 'take' from the community; they also gave in return. Students assisted at

local nursing homes, helped to raise money for charity, provided musical entertainment at community functions, and performed many other activities (pp. 15-17).

Parental involvement in the educational progress of their children has been noted as important by numerous researchers. Parental involvement has been described as a family process: The family works toward the achievement of the child, with guidance and participation from the school. More frequently, the practice of parental involvement is taking the form of alternative education programs. Parents are choosing to become involved with their own children in home education practices. They are providing support and guidance in the most involved way; they are electing to be their child's educator, in the home environment. Klicka (1992) stated that home school parents have a common commitment to making the necessary sacrifices "to personally provide an education for their children" (p. 122).

Research on the relationship between home and public schools in both Canada and the United States indicates that cooperative efforts have not come easily. Administrators and the public in general tend to be suspicious about home educators. Home school research in the United States has continuously pointed out that accommodation and cooperation are avenues that need to be pursued to ensure maximum benefits for home school parents and children and for local school districts (Knowles, 1988; Lines, 1985; Mayberry, 1988). An additional article by Mayberry (1989) stated the following:

> The implications of home schooling for the future of education in the US are still unclear. We know that the numbers of families choosing home schooling are increasing, but we cannot yet project the impact that these numbers will have on educational policy. If, however, the impact on public schools is significant, educational administrators will have to respond by initiating policies that either facilitate cooperation between home school

families and public schools or restrict the right of home school families to seek an alternative method of education for their children. (p. 178)

Historical Perspective of Home Education Programs

Home education has experienced a major change in both Canada and the United States in the past decade. Because very few Canadian studies have explored home education issues in great depth, the results of a study by Mayberry (1989) that reflected the American view of home education are included to provide one view of this topic. She conducted the study at the University of Nevada on home-based education in the United States and discussed demographics, motivations, and educational implications. The study revealed that "gradually more cooperative attitudes and policies between home-based educators and school authorities are developing and the desire for a more flexible education provision in the future is in prospect" (p. 171). Mayberry also stated that the current popularity of home-based education in the United States reflects the latest in a long history of important changes in the relationship between families and American education (p. 171). The family was responsible for the education of children prior to the nineteenth century; home schooling was the only form of education available to the children of the early colonists (Bailyn, 1960; Cremin, 1961; both cited in Mayberry, 1989, p. 171). Spring (1986; cited in Mayberry, 1989, p. 171) stated that the forms of education altered from family-based education to the development of specialized schools to large state systems; the relationship between families and schooling changed significantly, and the role of parents in respect to education was substantially diminished.

Although fewer articles have been published to document the Canadian scene, educational practices tend to parallel those of the American system. Through an investigation of local records, information was available in the form of school district handbooks on home education and documents published by the Department of Education. These documents were used to provide a brief historical review of the development of the home education scene from a local perspective.

The staff of the Curriculum and Instructional Services Department of the former Strathcona County Schools (now called Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division #14) compiled and published the *Handbook for Administrators and Parents* (1993) that briefly outlined a historical review of home education in Strathcona County. The review chronologically itemized the following facts about home education programs in this central Alberta community:

> Home-based education has been recognized by legislation in Alberta since 1910. Before 1980, the School Act, Section 143 (1)(a), made provision for "home schooling." Rigid regulations governed the procedural process of allowing a student to go on a home schooling program. . . .
>
> In 1983, Alberta Education provided funding support to jurisdictions on behalf of pupils being educated at home. . . .
>
> By September, 1985, Strathcona County had developed a policy for "Home Schooling" that stated "Home Schooling" would be permitted only under unusual and exceptional circumstances, such as:
>
> - chronic illness or disability,
> - religious or other convictions of parents which could not be accommodated within a school setting.
>
> Forms were issued to parents and had to be approved by the Superintendent prior to a contract being signed. Assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program and pupil progress were other components of the policy.
>
> In March, 1986, Alberta Education stated that contracts between parents and school jurisdictions were necessary in order for Boards to receive funding but that contracts no longer required approval by the Regional Offices of Education.
>
> The 1989 School Act [Section 23 (1)(a)(b)] also indicates that a home education student must:
>
> - be under the supervision of a board; . . .

- have the program approved by a resident board, or willing nonresident board. (pp. 5-6)

At a meeting of home education supervisors representing 28 northern Alberta school jurisdictions, Johnston (1993) recorded information provided by each jurisdiction on the following items:

- the number of home education students in their district
- the type of education programs being accessed by the parents
- whether the students and parents had access to school resources and facilities
- whether provision for supervision by a home education monitor was available
- the procedures in place for assessment and evaluation of student progress
- the amount of funding available to parents to offset the cost of home education programs
- the numbers of students registered with their respective resident boards, as well as those registered with willing nonresident boards.

At a May 6, 1994, network meeting of home-school coordinators from across the province, Steve Cymbol, an Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Education, indicated that changes to the home education rules and regulations guide were imminent with the passing of amendments to the school legislation and that these new guidelines would change the delivery of home education programs within the province (Johnston, 1994). Within months of this network meeting an information package (Alberta Education, 1994b) was provided by the office of the Minister of Education to educators and school districts. The *Home Education Regulation* outlined the principles

that would underpin the regulations and policies for home education programs in the province. The first 3 of the 13 principles were as follows:

1) Parents have the right to choose an education for their children consistent with their religious and conscientiously held beliefs.
2) If parents have the right to choose, choices must be available to them. This includes choice in curriculum, instructional materials, instructional methodology and supervising agent.
3) The province has a compelling interest in the education of all children and has a responsibility to ensure that what is taught . . . is sufficient and that the achievement of the students meets acceptable standards. (p. 1)

The remaining 10 principles can be found in the document (pp. 1-2).

McIntosh (1993, p. 2), Associate Superintendent of Edmonton Public Schools, prepared a report on home education students for the Edmonton Board of Trustees that stated that all programs established for home education students must meet the requirements of Alberta Education's goals of schooling and goals of education as specified in Section 25(1)(f) of the School Act (1990, p. 19). The report also stated that only the programs offered by the Alberta Distance Learning Centre had been approved by Alberta Education as meeting these goals. At the time that this report was written, the other 25 known programs used by home educators had not been formally assessed by Alberta Education. Even though a core of similarity existed in the types of curriculum that parents were using, some variation between programs was observed, and the nature of home schooling was considered to be highly unregulated nationally, as well as provincially.

McIntosh (1993, p. 2) also reported that Alberta Education indicated that it would be focusing efforts on establishing a measurement of outcomes rather than assessing each and every program available to home educators. The outcome-measures concept had also been explored in many areas of the

United States during the 1980s. Parents have continued to be concerned about the methods used to evaluate home education programs. Roach (1988) commented:

> As the states moved toward outcome measures for public education, the time is ripe for the same measures to be taken for home educators. The state is concerned more with the quality of the outcome of home instruction, than with which materials are used in the education process. (p. 12)

Changes in the policies guiding the evaluation of home education programs will continue to surface as the provincial goals and outcomes for education are established for school jurisdictions and home educators.

During the past decade an increasing number of American families have also chosen to home-educate their children. Mayberry (1989) stated that the American family has rejected institutionalized forms of schooling in favor of the more traditional form of family-controlled learning (p. 171). Nardine and Morris (1991), in discussing the commitment of American families to their children's education, stated: "Today's parents increasingly desire a voice in the educational process. Legislators and state and local school officials need to view parents as legitimate partners in their children's education" (p. 366). Parents are willing to assume the responsibility for home schooling especially when they feel that the more traditional school setting does not facilitate or encourage their involvement in the educational process.

In view of this information, the guidelines for home education programs are providing popular options for the education of children outside the school setting. The School Act (1990) for the Province of Alberta states that "a parent of a student may provide, at home or elsewhere, a home education program for the student if the program (a) meets the requirements of the regulations, and (b) is under the supervision of a board" (p. 18).

Many different levels of responsibility are found within the delivery of home education programs in the Province of Alberta. Each has a different focus and set of responsibilities in relation to home education. The different responsibilities are carefully outlined in the Alberta Education (1994b) *Home Education Regulation: Information Package.* The following is a summary of some of the individual responsibilities outlined in the document:

Provincial Level (Alberta Education)

- prescribes courses of study or education programs, including the amount of instruction time
- authorizes courses of study, programs, and instructional materials
- approves particular courses or prohibits them
- approves goals and standards of education within the province
- provides funding to school jurisdictions for allocation to home education programs

School District Level

- provides each student with an education program consistent with Alberta Education stipulations
- enrols the student in a school operated by a board
- pays the fees and costs for education programs (i.e., Alberta Distance Learning)
- assigns a teacher or system substitute to assume the role of home education monitor or facilitator
- provides for and maintains records of assessment of student achievement

- ensures that students write the Alberta achievement tests or any other provincially mandated test

School Level

- assists the parent with the development of a home education program plan
- provides assistance and advice to home educating parents
- outlines the school facilities and resources that are available to the parent for home education purposes

Parents

- comply with the rules and regulations outlined by the Minister of Education
- provide a program that is consistent with the goals of schooling and the goals of education as specified under section 25(1)(f) of the School Act (1990)
- provide a plan that outlines the skills and competencies to be achieved, instructional methods to be used, activities and resources used to achieve the learning objectives, and to outline the methods of assessment that will be used
- maintain a portfolio of the student's work, ensure that the student is available for assessment by the supervising board, and ensure that the child will write the equivalent Alberta achievement tests. (pp. 4-15)

The policies used to guide home education in Alberta are as varied as the school jurisdictions themselves. As is customary with the development of most policies, it is essential that a standard for evaluating the decision-

making criteria be firmly in place. MacRae (1976) suggested that the standards of clarity, consistency, and generalizability surround policy (pp. 279-89). These standards provide a format for evaluating any policy that is in operation and could be used for evaluating home education policy.

The Alberta School Act (1990, p. 18) stipulated that home education students must be supervised by a board, but did not specify which school board a parent must choose. Parents are free to choose any school board in the province of Alberta to monitor their program. The *Home Education Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b) stated the following: "Giving parents the right and responsibility to choose the kind of education their child will receive, reflects sound public policy" (p. iii).

At the time of data collection in the spring of 1994, full funding was provided by Alberta Education to school districts to administer to home education programs within their jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions in the province parents received up to $1,000 to assist them with their home programs, based on a submission of a receipt for expenses. Other districts would reimburse parents for the cost of the programs they were using; the actual amount could vary between families within the same district. The provincial *Home Education Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b) stated that the amount of funding for home education programs was cut by 50% (p. 13) and that home educators were entitled to 50% of the grant issued to school jurisdictions (p. 14). An excerpt from the *Home Education Regulation* stated the following: "The School Foundation Program Fund (SFPF) grant was designed as an instructional grant in a school setting and it was generally agreed that the provision of 100% SFPF to a board for performing a supervisory and assessment function was unnecessary" (p. 13).

The Nature of Home Education

A growing segment of the population in both Canada and the United States has lost confidence in the ability of public schools to provide the education they want for their children. Kropp (1995) stated that home schooling provides an opportunity to go far beyond the public school curriculum by incorporating travel, personal expertise and intensive one-on-one teaching as part of an education in which you really believe (p. 29). Audain (1987) stated that two imperatives drive this home school movement:

- the negative exit impulse, whereby parents are driven to escape the traditional, institutionalized, formal systems—state or independent; . . . [and]
- the positive entry impulse moves parents to home education because they see it as their natural role and an extension of what they do anyway with their children as they grow up. (p. 18)

The growth of home education as a social phenomenon since 1970 has been considerable both in its visibility and in its momentum. The question as to whether it qualifies as a social movement will be considered through examining the criteria outlined in Gerlach and Hine's (1970) definition of a social movement.

> A social movement is a group of people who are organized for, ideologically motivated by and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change; who are actively engaged in the recruitment of others; and whose influence is spreading in opposition to the established order within which it originated. (p. 16)

Gerlach and Hine (1970) maintained that the five factors of organization, ideology, recruitment, commitment, and opposition must be present and interacting before a true movement can exist. Relating the five factors to the phenomenon of home education reveals aspects of the nature of home education.

The organization of home schooling is described by Gerlach and Hine (1970) as being "decentralized, segmentary, and reticulate" (p. 18). The literature indicated that this was true in both the United States and Canada. The organization of home educators has many small groups working towards the accomplishments of their individual goals. The Canadian branch of the organization known as the Home School Legal Defense Association functions as a spokesgroup for these small groups of home educators. In Alberta other groups that have formed associations to put pressure on the government and individual school boards include the Home Education Corporation of Alberta (HECA) and the Alberta Home Education Association (AHEA). Many home educators belong to the AHEA; however, they retain their own small groups for their individual needs.

The second factor in Gerlach and Hine's (1970) definition of the essential criteria that must exist before an event can be classed as a social movement is that an ideology must be present. American advocates of home schooling Holt (1981), Moore (1984), and Ray (1988, 1990) professed their individual, somewhat diverse, ideologies about home schooling. Although the home schooling movement is not as developed in Canada as it is in the United States, there are a number of Canadians who have begun to speak up about the ideologies they identify with regard to home education. Audain (1987), Common and McMullen (1986), Hill (1988, 1989), Priesnitz (1987), Priesnitz and Priesnitz (1990), and Stasiewich and Stasiewich (1994) all provide examples of ideologies which have been widely publicized among home educators on the Canadian scene.

Recruitment to home schooling was by word of mouth in the earlier stages of development. However, changes to the School Act and the Regulations for Home Education have become public issues; magazines and

newspapers now advertise the dates and locations of meetings for home educators. They publish articles citing the growing number of home-educated students, as well as the comments of home educating parents.

The commitment of home educators in Canada and the United States has been attested to in many forms during the past decade. Parents have taken the education system to court to gain freedom to educate their children in ways acceptable to their own philosophies. Klicka (1992) discussed the recognition of parents' rights in the courts of the United States as early as 1620 (pp. 111-116); he also cited actual court cases of a large number of early home educators in a subsequent chapter on *Parents' Rights and the Constitution* (pp. 314-325). As Senior Counsel for the American branch of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), Klicka handled scores of court cases and over 2,000 legal conflicts in trying to deal with school officials and social workers. Similarly, in Canada, court cases involving home education issues are becoming more prevalent. In Alberta, the case of *Jones v. the Queen* (1986; cited in Alberta Education, 1994b) was one incident that revealed the commitment of home educators. In this case Jones was charged with truancy for failing to register the "private school" in which he taught his children. This case resulted in changes to the School Act to clarify the rights of home educators and the issues relating to compulsory attendance laws.

A final factor that Gerlach and Hine (1970) stated that must be present before a phenomenon such as home schooling could be considered as a social movement was the presence of opposition. The home schooling movement has definitely moved out of the confines of the home and into the public eye. "The greater their political mobilization, all other things equal, the greater has been their success in changing laws affecting them"

(Cibulka, 1991, p. 111). Home educators are making sure that their wishes are being heard in the legislature and in the courts, and they are reporting the results to the press more frequently. Zirkel (1991) stated: "The advocates of home schooling have tended to win in the state legislatures but to lose in the courts" (p. 408). Stasiewich and Stasiewich (1994) noted the increasing number of home educators that seek the assistance of agencies. They stated that over 600 families in nine Canadian provinces have a membership with the HSLDA.

Priesnitz (1987) described the nature of the Canadian educational scene. She stated that parents do not generally stand in judgment of schools or the process that school personnel use to educate children; that parents merely wish to pursue the learning alternatives most suitable to their particular children (p. 102). According to a survey of 400 Canadian parents by Priesnitz and Priesnitz (1990), parents are exercising the legal right to educate their children at home more frequently in the 1990s and choose home education for the following reasons:

> the desire to be involved in their child's education; the belief that the school system is devastating to natural inquisitiveness; the inadequate individual attention precluded by the pupil-teacher ratio; and the need for their child to explore life on a day-to-day basis rather than be confined in a classroom. (p. 4)

Education programs cost substantial amounts of money for school districts and also for parents involved in home schooling ventures. Klicka (1992) suggested that school districts are often more concerned with the loss of educational dollars to their system than they are with what children are actually learning or not learning at home (p. 230). Taylor (1991), a reporter for the *Alberta Report,* stated that a key factor supporting parents who chose to home school was that a parent could apply to any school board in the province for permission to enrol a child in that system. The

parent could ask for financial support from that board to offset the costs of educating the child at home. The parents could essentially 'strike a deal' with any school board with which they chose to cooperate in educating their children (p. 33). Some school boards in the province were known to be more accommodating to home educators than others and, consequently, had a larger following of home education clients.

Home education practices are gaining the acceptance and understanding of the general public. The home-educated child has become a part of the community and often a part of the school itself (Lineburg; cited in Natale, 1992, p. 26). Research has shown that the academic achievement of home-educated children is as high as or higher than that of children receiving the more traditional types of schooling (Berlin, 1989; Frost, 1988; Lines, 1986; Ray, 1986, 1988, 1990; Wartes, 1988). "Researchers have consistently found it easy to find home schoolers are doing well. I have been unable to find even one study that has produced below-average mean scores on a home schooling population" (Wartes, p. 50). Recent surveys have also suggested that this higher level of achievement is being accomplished by some home-educated students in half the time allotted to students in public education. As a result, schools and school districts are becoming more interested in the phenomenon of home education and are "seeking new ways to keep the lines of communication open with home educators" (Marshall, 1992, p. 29).

More often parents are citing their reasons for choosing to home-educate as a protection against the negative aspects of peer influence that their children face within the public school systems (Priesnitz, 1987, p. 13). Other researchers have explored the same topic as one of the many reasons that parents elect to home-educate their children. Bendell (1987) believed

that violence in schools has been the result of large numbers of children being herded together with little acknowledgement of their feelings for each other. She felt that children need to feel free to respond to one another as individuals without being forced into interaction with persons with whom they may have very little in common (p. 65). Bendell stated that a school set-up "encourages the disintegration into mutually exclusive groups, invites a pecking order to be established and breeds intolerance which is then perpetually being carried out into society" (p. 65). Klicka (1992) commented that the greatest benefit from home schooling socialization was that "the child can be protected from the negative socialization of the public schools associated with peer pressure, such as rebellious attitudes, immaturity, immorality, drugs, and violent behavior" (p. 137).

There are many concerns associated with the nature of home education programs, some of which are more universally agreed upon than others. Some feel that educating a child at home means sacrificing the child's education (Sheffer, 1989). As editor of *Growing Without Schooling,* Sheffer pointed out that "many school board members and school administrators still look on home schooling as something to be tolerated. That is unfortunate because home schoolers have much to offer their school colleagues, and both sides could benefit by cooperating" (p. 34). Frost and Morris (1988) identified home education issues that are common concerns:

> First, and most important, the home-school setting must be recognized as a viable alternative for achieving traditional school-related academic goals. . . . Second, public school administrators need to cooperate wholeheartedly and help home-schooled children and parents. . . . Third, new emphasis on designing and improving instructional methods for home-schoolers needs to be encouraged. (p. 226)

These issues have also been identified by educators and school district personnel in the province of Alberta as vital to the success of home

education programs. Most often, the collaborative efforts of both home and school, to include the parents, the child, and the local school are seen as the best possible educational environment for the child.

Parents have become more verbal about their options to choose home schooling, and this option is being exercised more frequently in both the U.S. and Canada. Moore and Moore (1990, p. 62) reported that more than 500,000 US children were being schooled at home, a tenfold increase in a decade. The outcome of this major trend in education has many ramifications for children, parents, and educators. It will require careful observation and research over time. In a special report in *Newsweek,* Kantrowitz and Wingert (1989) stated:

> Ages 5 through 8 are wonder years. That's when children begin learning to study, to reason, and to cooperate. We can put them in desks and drill them all day or we can keep them moving, touching, and exploring. The experts favor a hands-on-approach, but changing the way schools teach isn't easy. The stakes are high and parents can help. (p. 50)

Kantrowitz and Takayama (1989) focused on the educational practices of the Japanese. It is a Japanese belief that early educational practices have helped their students attain the highest science and mathematics scores in the world. They stated that most Americans attribute the success of the Japanese to a "rigid system that sets youngsters on a lock-step march from cradle to college" (p. 54), and that "illiteracy is virtually nonexistent in Japan" (p. 54). They reported that more than 90% of Japanese students graduate from high school and that more than 80% enter kindergarten with some skill in reading and writing. Much of this success is being credited to the mothers' role in the education of their children. In this article, Shigefumi Nagano, a Director of the National Institute for Educational Research, stated: "'It is as if mothers had their own built-in curriculum'" (p. 54).

Odom (1990) attributed mothers with a similar role in the achievement and success of children. In the foreword to Odom's book, Bell stated that Odom explored the view that "the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." He stated that the child-rearing practices of the mother are the first factor in determining the levels of achievement and intelligence that the child will attain (p. 97). Odom also stated: "The children who tend to develop the highest intelligence levels are the children of both dominant and nondominant mothers who have a greater-than-average interest in learning and consequently make strong demands for early intellectual achievements" (p. 97). Klicka (1992) stated that mothers are placing a priority on the nurturing and discipline of their children that cannot be measured in dollars and cents (p. 139).

Summary of Literature Review

The literature on home schooling was reviewed in three major sections. The first section dealt with current research on the impact of parental involvement in education and considered the impact that parental involvement had on student achievement in the more traditional school setting. The second section reviewed the historical development of home education programs in the province of Alberta, and the final section reviewed the nature of home education practices.

The three bodies of literature reviewed for this study correspond to the research questions. The literature indicated that although parents and educators agreed that involvement of parents in the education of their children was important, it is often difficult to visualize what that involvement would encompass and what the parameters for involvement would be. The role of the mother has been considered a valuable contribution to the child's

education, and the literature has indicated that the mother's involvement has an impact on the academic achievement of the child. Parents who place a high priority on learning for their children are able to reinforce school-based programs and provide a positive atmosphere for scholastic achievement.

In the historical-review section of the literature review, it was indicated that the number of home education students in the province of Alberta has increased steadily in the last decade at a rate of 35% per year. School districts and Alberta Education have been required to re-assess and revise the policies and regulations guiding the practice of home education, with particular emphasis on the allocation of funding and the direction that monitoring and assessment of home education students will take in the future.

In examining the literature regarding the nature of home education, Gerlach and Hine's (1970) five factors of organization, ideology, recruitment, commitment, and opposition were explored as they related to home education practices:

> A social movement is a group of people who are organized for, ideologically motivated by and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change; who are actively engaged in the recruitment of others; and whose influence is spreading in opposition to the established order within which it originated. (p. 16)

The literature explored the reasons why parents chose to home-educate their children and discussed the concerns about home education practices. A public concern is that home education students lack socialization skills; however, the curriculum is outlined to provide opportunities for the teaching of civic responsibilities. A home education curriculum resembles that of the regular school curriculum and must be approved by Alberta Education. The home education curriculum would not be approved unless it covered the

Goals of Education as outlined by Alberta Education (1989). Parents indicated that their home schooled students were involved in a variety of other activities related to church, sports, and community volunteerism. This indicates that the issue of socialization has been addressed by home educators.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research design, the methodological procedures for the study, and the research context are presented in this chapter. The specific techniques that were used to collect, organize, and analyze the data are also included. This presentation describes the types of data collection used: a parent questionnaire (Appendix A), an interview questionnaire (Appendix B), and direct observation of subjects in the field. The validity, reliability, and ethical considerations of the study are addressed in this chapter.

The researcher spent several months as an observer at regional meetings for home educators in centers across the province of Alberta. These meetings involved the exchange of information between new home educators and seasoned veterans. The researcher was also invited to attend the network meetings arranged for the Home Education Coordinators from all school districts in the province. The meetings with home educators and coordinators of the programs provided the researcher with a base of knowledge regarding the nature of home education practices in the province.

Research Design

The descriptive study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the needs of home educators and identify the reasons why parents choose to home-educate their children. Bridges (1982) stated that there are at least four possibilities for collecting data: "administering questionnaires, holding interviews, observing subjects directly, and examining traces of records of people and/or their activities"

(p. 15). Three of the four methods outlined by Bridges were used in the collection of data for this study.

The study was conducted using a combination of a parent questionnaire, individual interviews, and direct observation of home education students in their home environments. The questionnaire and the interview guide were developed to elicit responses from participants in order to address the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 of this study.

The collection of data for the study included a survey of parents whose children were being educated at home. It also included an interview of six individuals directly responsible for home education programs and practices from two central Alberta school districts. The research questions provided a guideline for the format of the interviews with these individuals. In addition, individual home-schooled students were observed in their home environment by the researcher during the regular assessment visit of the designated monitor.

Selection of Subjects

Respondents to the questionnaire were solicited from among the home educators attending the annual convention for home educators in Red Deer, Alberta, in April 1994. There were 800 parents attending this convention from a membership of over 1,000 families. The number of home-schooled students in the province at this time was 4,650. The President of the Alberta Home Education Association encouraged all home educators at the convention to participate in the research by completing the parent questionnaire for this study. In addition, questionnaires were mailed to all registered home educators in the Strathcona County School District during the first week of June.

The subjects for the interview were purposively selected by the researcher. Each of the six individuals was chosen to represent a specific level of administration in the management of and responsibility for home educating families within two specific school jurisdictions. One level of administration included the superintendent, a second level included the coordinator of the home education program, and a third level included the monitor of the home education program.

Instrument

Initial drafts of the questionnaire were discussed with a small group of individuals knowledgeable about home education practices. The items on the questionnaire were reviewed and selected after a careful study of other instruments developed by Canadian researchers in this area of study. Two instruments that were used as guidelines were the surveys of Dugas (1991) and Long (1993). Both researchers had recently surveyed Alberta home educators. The final draft of the parent questionnaire was constructed by the researcher, with the assistance of two Home Education Coordinators. It was pilot-tested by a group of 28 home education facilitators/monitors during a home education network meeting before final revisions were made.

The instrument was organized to include demographic sections, Likert scale response sections, open-ended questions, and a resource checklist section. This format was considered appropriate for the type of data sought in this study. The questionnaire and accompanying letter of introduction can be found in Appendix A of this document. The questionnaire also addressed the programs that home educators used and requested specific demographic information about their qualifications as home educators and their place of residence, their needs as home educators, the reasons that they chose to

home-educate their children, and the resources and services that would be useful to them as home educators.

Data Collection

Data were collected from individuals knowledgeable about or actively engaged in the operation of home education programs in the spring of 1994. The questionnaires were distributed to all home educators attending the annual convention of the Alberta Home Education Association (AHEA) in April 1994. The President of the AHEA introduced the researcher and the research project to the group of home educators assembled at the convention in his opening remarks. Participation in the study of all parents who were active home educators at the time was encouraged. Questionnaires were also mailed to all home educators registered with Strathcona County Schools in June 1994. A follow-up attempt was made to encourage the return of completed questionnaires; a memo reminder to participants was published in the *AHEA Newsletter* (1994). This newsletter was mailed to all home educators who were active members of the Alberta Home Educators Association and might have attended the convention where the questionnaire was initially circulated.

The researcher spent three weeks in the field observing home education programs in operation in central Alberta communities. This provided the researcher with a better understanding of the issues surrounding home education practices and allowed the researcher to get to know the participants who would be interviewed for the second phase of the data collection.

The interviews with the six district personnel were structured to allow the interviewer to follow an interview guide, with minimal deviation from the

guide in order to maintain focus. The interview guide had been pilot-tested by three individuals at different levels of responsibility in home education in order to make the questions clear and meaningful to the respondents. The six individuals were asked five questions about the planning, delivery, and supervision of home education programs within their respective school jurisdictions. The interviews were scheduled within one week and were held at the home of the researcher. The interviews varied in length, ranging from 20 minutes to one hour. Each interview was done in person, taped, and transcribed, and the transcribed interviews were sent to each individual for verification and approval.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire responses were analyzed to provide a descriptive statistical summary of the various sections of the instrument. Frequency distributions were determined for demographic items and for the resource checklist. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the Likert scale statements.

The statements were organized in descending order of perceived importance to home educators based on the mean scores for each statement within each section of the instrument dealing with the Likert responses. The open-ended-question response sections were summarized and categorized into common themes.

Interview transcripts were analyzed with respect to each of the five questions. The transcripts were scrutinized for common themes and perceptions or discrepancies of perceptions within the framework of the questions.

Ethical Considerations

The research proposal followed the established guidelines and procedures outlined by the University of Alberta. The participation of all parents and district personnel was voluntary. All information collected through surveys, field notes, and interviews was regarded as confidential. Individuals who consented to an interview were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. They had the option of receiving a typed copy of the comments and information recorded from their interview for verification as to the accuracy of the transcription. The audiotapes of the six participants were erased upon completion of the study. All individuals who completed the questionnaire were informed of the purpose of the study and how the information would be used. Data were treated confidentially, and the identification of participants was safeguarded as much as possible. Any published work that might result from this dissertation will be treated similarly.

Validity and Reliability

To heighten the validity of the instrument, several experts in the field of home education reviewed and critiqued the instrument in its formative stages. Through successive revisions, the experts reached consensus that the instrument would provide the needed information to address the research questions.

Reliability was addressed in this study by providing those interviewed with transcripts of the interviews for their verification. All six interviewees checked the transcripts, and some made suggestions and corrections.

It was essential for the researcher to establish an atmosphere of trust with the individuals being interviewed, which was facilitated by spending

three weeks in the field working closely with the people selected for the interviews.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are three activities that increase the probability that credible findings will be produced. They include "prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation" (p. 301). These three activities were used as a basis for the collection of data in this study.

Methodological Assumptions

The researcher made two methodological assumptions with regard to this study: (a) that the instrument was a valid measure of the issues surrounding home education, and (b) that all participants in the study were open and honest and provided an accurate description of the home education process as they perceived it.

Delimitations

Data were collected from home educators in the province of Alberta who were in attendance at the annual convention of the Alberta Home Education Association (AHEA) in the spring of 1994 and from home educators registered with Strathcona County Schools (now called Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division #14). The information was obtained from two sources: parents whose children were involved in home education programs and those educators who supervised the programs or were directly responsible for the operation of the program within the school jurisdictions included in this study. The latter individuals included two superintendents in charge of the program planning for home educators, the home education coordinators, and the home education monitors or facilitators within their

respective school jurisdictions. Home schooling parents were not interviewed. It was felt that, given the focus of the study, appropriate and sufficient data could be obtained by means of questionnaires.

Finally, this study was delimited to investigating and understanding the perceptions that parents and school district personnel have regarding the reasons why parents choose to home-educate, their needs as home educators, and how a collaborative approach to delivering effective home education programs might be developed within any given school jurisdiction.

Limitations

Several limitations restricted the scope of this study:

1. The number of home educators in attendance at the convention was small compared to the number of home educators in the province. Given the nature of the study sample, it may not be possible to generalize the findings to all home schooling parents in Alberta. Those who belong to the Alberta Home Education Association may not be representative of the entire home schooling population. Furthermore, those who returned the questionnaire may not be representative of the AHEA membership.

2. The interview procedure for district personnel was very structured. The participants were asked to respond to five specific questions.

3. The provincial *Home Education Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b) were under revision at the time that this study was conducted. Knowledge of the new regulations might have encouraged participants to respond in a different manner to individual items on the questionnaire or in the interviews.

Summary

Chapter 3 has presented an overview of the methodology used in this study. The research design was described, and the procedure for data collection and analysis was outlined. The ethical considerations that guided the study were identified. Issues relating to validity and reliability of the parent questionnaire and the interview questionnaire guide were discussed. The methodological assumptions and limitations were presented.

The next chapter will present the findings related to the parent questionnaires.

CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

Introduction and Organization of the Results

This chapter presents the findings related to the results of the questionnaire according to the five research questions. Research Question 1 addressed the profile of participation in home education. Research Question 2 addressed the kinds of programs that home educating families used during the time that this study was conducted. Research Question 3 addressed the reasons why families chose home education. Research Question 4 addressed the needs of home educators. Research Question 5 addressed the nature of the services and resources provided to home educators by school district personnel. The results are presented in the order that the research questions were outlined.

Research Question 1: What Is the Profile of Participators in Home Education?

This section reports the demographic information of the 119 families who participated in this survey. It was not possible to separate the questionnaires of those attending the convention from the questionnaires circulated to participants in the school district. The information is presented in the following order: the age distribution and grade of each child in the family, whether each child in the family is attending a formal school or is being educated at home, who the key educators are, what their educational background is, the place of residence of the home educating family, the occupation of the parents, their religious affiliation, and the annual income of all wage earners in the family.

The information describing the profile of the home schooling family is presented in Table 1 and reports the percentages and/or the frequency distributions for each item. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of children in the families represented in this study. The 119 families had a total of 373 children ranging in age from 1 to 28 years old. This number included 68 preschoolers (1-4 years of age), 287 school-age children, and 18 over the age of 18.

Table 1

Grade of Children by Type of School They Attended

Grade	n	H.S.	%	P.S.	%	Pr.S.	%	O.	%	N.A.	%
Kindergarten	27	23	85.2	2	7.4	2	7.4	-	-	-	-
Grade 1	31	29	93.6	1	3.2	1	3.2	-	-	-	-
Grade 2	35	33	94.3	2	5.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 3	26	22	84.6	3	11.3	1	3.9	-	-	-	-
Grade 4	24	23	95.8	1	4.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 5	22	22	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 6	19	16	84.2	3	15.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 7	17	14	82.4	1	5.9	2	11.8	-	-	-	-
Grade 8	14	11	78.6	2	14.3	1	7.1	-	-	-	-
Grade 9	22	16	72.7	3	13.6	2	9.1	1	4.6	-	-
Grade 10	7	5	71.4	1	14.3	1	14.3	-	-	-	-
Grade 11	10	8	80.0	1	10.0	-	-	-	-	1	10.0
Grade 12	6	4	66.7	2	33.3	-	-	-	-	-	-

Notes. H.S. Home school
P.S. Public school
Pr.S. Private school
O. Other
N.A. Not applicable

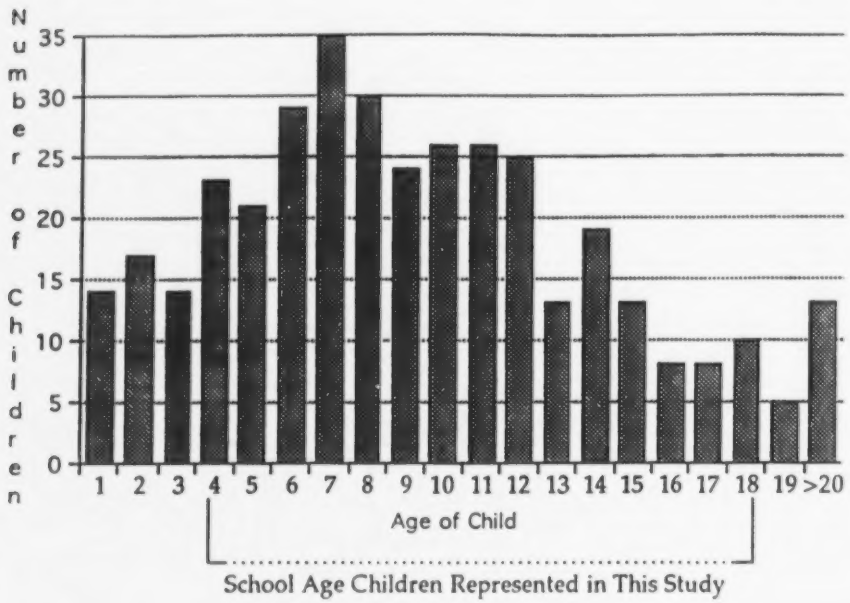

Figure 1. Age distribution of children in home schooling families.

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution and percentage of school-age children according to grade level and type of school they were attending. The results of this questionnaire reveal that some families may have one child attending a private school, another attending a public school, and possibly other children being educated at home. The table shows that of the 260 children represented, 226 are being educated at home, 22 are attending a public school, 10 are registered in a private school, and 2 are not in school. The number of students at each grade level varied, with a range from 4 in Grade 12 to 33 in Grade 2. attending a public school, 10 are registered in a private school, and 2 are not in school. The number of students at each grade level varied, with a range from 4 in Grade 12 to 33 in Grade 2.

Registration of home schoolers with a school board is required of all home education students, according to Section 23 (1)(b) of the Alberta School Act (1990). Because students must be under the supervision of a board, it becomes the responsibility of parents to choose the type of school jurisdiction with which they wish to cooperate in setting up an educational plan for their children. A *resident school board* is the board of the district or division of which the student is a resident student. A *willing nonresident board* is a board of a school district in which the student is not a resident, but with which the student is registered. Table 2 presents a breakdown of where students are registered. The information reported that 48 families (40.3%) were registered with their resident board, 64 families (53.8%) were registered with a willing nonresident school board, and the remaining 7 families (5.9%) declined to respond to this survey item.

Table 2

Types of School Boards With Which Home Education Families Were Registered (n = 119)

Type of school board	f	%	Valid %
Resident	48	40.3	42.9
Nonresident	64	53.8	57.1
No answer	7	5.9	

The following information enables the reader to take a closer look at the key teachers involved with the home education programs in this study and to know the educational qualifications of those individuals acting as the key educators. Table 3 identifies the key teachers of children being educated at home. The mother was reported as the key teacher in 80.08% of the cases. Both parents were active teachers 13.41% of the time. It

was also reported that fathers were the key teacher of their children 3.45% of the time. A final 3.10% of the parents surveyed indicated that a tutor or other individual was responsible for teaching their children.

Table 3

Key Teacher of Home Education Students (n = 261)

	Birth order of children										
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	Total	%
Key teacher	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f
Mother	74	72	37	15	5	1	1	2	2	209	80.08
Father	3	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	9	3.45
Mother & father	16	12	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	35	13.41
Tutor	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	.77
Other	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2.30

Table 4 shows the academic qualifications of individuals identified as the key teacher. The individuals who responded to this item (12 questionnaires did not have a response for this item) indicated that 5 mothers had fewer than 12 years of education, 32 of them had a high school diploma, 36 had some college or university training, 22 had a college or university degree, 8 had an Alberta Teaching Certificate, and the remaining 4 mothers had training in other disciplines. The academic qualifications of fathers who indicated that they were a key teacher of their children showed that 2 of the 23 fathers who responded had less than a high school diploma, 2 had a diploma, 6 had some college or university training, 8 of 23 had a degree from a college or university, 1 had a teaching certificate, and 4 fathers had training in other areas.

Table 4

Educational Background of the Key Teachers in the Home Education Household

Years of education	Mother	Father	Tutor	Other
Fewer than 12 years	5	2	0	0
High school diploma	32	2	0	0
Some college/university	36	6	0	0
College/university degree	22	8	0	0
Alberta Teaching Certificate	8	1	1	0
Other	4	4	0	0

The findings of this study related to the educational background of the key teacher are consistent with the findings of Priesnitz and Priesnitz's (1990) study of home educating families. The results indicate that 7% of the 400 parents who responded to Priesnitz and Priesnitz's survey had less than a high school diploma (5.38% of the parents in this study were in the same category); 26% of the parents in the Priesnitz study had a high school diploma compared with 26.15% of the parents participating in this study, and 66% of the parents in the Priesnitz study had either college training or a degree from a college or university compared with 55.38% of the parents who responded to this study.

Although many of the key teachers surveyed in this study had a high school diploma or a degree from a college or university, there are many studies that have found no positive correlation between the educational performance of a child and the academic qualification of the child's teacher. The following three studies confirmed this finding. Hanushek (1990; cited in Klicka, 1992, p. 239) found that in 113 studies on teacher education and

qualifications, 85% of the studies found no positive correlation between student performance and the educational background of the teacher, 7% of the studies found a positive correlation, and 5% found a negative impact. Ericksen (1990; cited in Klicka, p. 241) stated that student testing was a far superior method of determining teacher effectiveness than the qualifications of the teacher. Peavy (1988; cited in Klicka), testifying before the Compulsory Education Study Committee of the Iowa Legislature on the subject of teacher qualifications, stated:

> May I say that I have spent a long career in developing and administering programs for teacher certification. I wish I could tell you that those thousands of certificates contributed significantly to the quality of children's learning, but I cannot... After fifty years of research, we have found no significant correlation between the requirements for teacher certification and the quality of student achievement. (p. 240)

Further examination of the profile of the home education family explored the place of residence, the occupation of both parents, their religious affiliation, and the combined annual income of the household members. Table 5 presents information regarding the place of residence of the participants of this study in frequencies and percentages. It was reported that 70.6% of the families lived in urban locations, 25.2% lived in rural settings, and 2.5% indicated other types of residence, such as military bases or national parks. There were two families who did not respond to this item.

Interestingly, the largest number of respondents (43) were from large cities. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting these figures because of the higher population in the urban centres. Proportionally, or in relation to the size of the population in rural areas, there appears to be a larger number of home schoolers in the rural areas in this study.

Table 5

Place of Residence of Home Education Family

Place of residence	Frequency	Percentage
Large city (>50,000)	43	36.1
Small city (10,000-50,000)	22	18.5
Town (2,500-10,000)	19	16.0
Rural (<2,500)	10	8.4
Farm/ranch	20	16.8
Other	3	2.5
Total	117	

Table 6 presents a distribution of home education participants according to their occupations. The largest number of fathers described themselves as occupied in professional/technical (58 of 119) positions, and the second most common type of occupation was self-employment (16 of 119). The mothers' most frequent type of occupation was that of homemaker (86 of 119), and the second most common occupation for mothers participating in this survey was self-employment (11 of 119). Odom (1990) and Nagano (cited in Kantrowitz & Takayama, 1989) agreed that the role of the mother in the academic success of the child is significant.

In comparison with the Priesnitz and Priesnitz (1990) study, where 29% of home educating parents were self-employed, 23.4% of the parents in this study were self-employed. Although the Priesnitz study did not ask mothers to identify their major occupations, other studies by Karnes (1992) and Schmidt (1989) identified the mother's occupation most frequently as homemaker. These findings concur with those in this study.

Table 6

Distribution of Participants in the Home Education Survey According to Occupation

	Mother		Father	
Occupation	f	%	f	%
Craft	0	0.0	1	0.9
Farm/ranch/agriculture	1	0.9	4	3.5
Homemaker	86	74.1	1	0.9
Manager/administrator	1	0.9	11	9.6
Professional/technical	7	6.0	58	50.4
Retired	0	0.0	1	0.9
Sales/clerical	2	1.7	2	1.7
Self-employed	11	9.5	16	13.9
Semi-skilled/unskilled	0	0.0	3	2.6
Service	2	1.7	5	4.3
Student	2	1.7	3	2.6
Unemployed	2	1.7	1	0.9
Other	2	1.7	9	7.8
No response	3	2.5	4	3.4
Total	119		119	

Another aspect of the profile of the home educating family was their religious background. Most participants in this survey identified a specific religious affiliation, as presented in Table 7. Religious affiliations that were specified and recorded were those religions that were most frequently listed. Other denominations identified by individual families were Charismatic, Church of God, Born Again Christian, Anglican, Moravian, Presbyterian,

United, Latter Day Saints, Faith Covenant, and Fellowship of Christian Assemblies. Nondenominational and Alliance religious affiliations were listed by three families. Twelve individual responses indicated N/A, and three responses were blank.

Table 7

Religious Affiliations of Home Educating Parents

	Father	Mother
Religious affiliation	f	f
Christian	17	17
Evangelical	16	16
Protestant	14	16
Pentecostal	12	13
Roman Catholic	10	11
Baptist	7	8
Jehovah's Witness	5	7
Lutheran	6	5

Figure 2 presents the combined annual income of all wage earners in each home schooling family, which was the final item that explored the profile of the home educating family. The combined income of home education families was between $35,000 and $49,999 (33%), with 100 of 114 families reporting a total annual income in excess of $25,000 (87%) and 34 of 119 reporting an income of $50,000 (30%) and over. One family reported an annual income of less than $10,000, whereas nine families quoted their income as exceeding $75,000. These figures are consistent with the findings of Priesnitz and Priesnitz (1990): Of the 107 families

involved in the study, 51% reported incomes of less than $30,000, 41% reported incomes between $31,000 and $60,000, and 8% reported incomes in excess of $60,000.

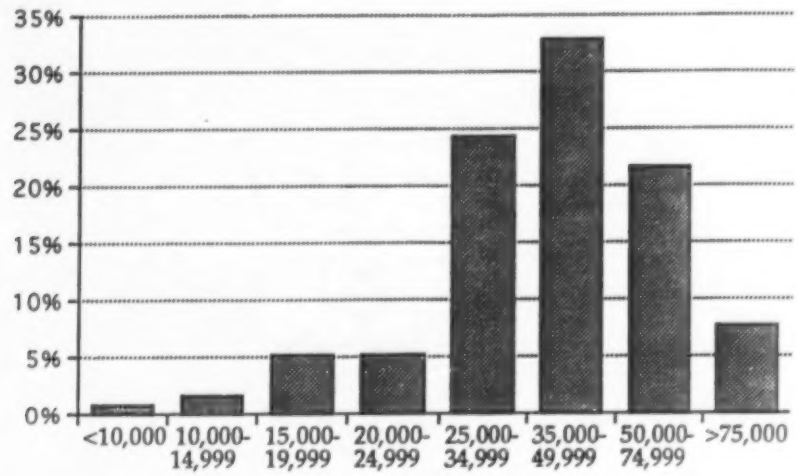

Figure 2. Combined annual income of all wage earners in the family.

Research Question 2: What Kinds of Programs Do Home Education Families Use?

The following information presents a summary of the programs that home educators used, specifying their first and alternate choices of programs for use at the different grade levels. The researcher asked several parents why they selected so many different programs in setting up the education plan for their children. The parents were concerned mainly that the goals and objectives of the programs would meet the individual needs of their children and that the programs would allow their children to learn the different skills that were essential for a successful transition to a secondary educational institution of their choice. Parents would often seek the advice or counsel of other home educators on the selection of a program for a

particular child or a specific grade level. Home-schooler Bendell (1987) shared her experiences with other home educators. The following comments relate to Bendell's thoughts about program selection:

> Children are not only limited by the choice of books in the school library. Virtually every aspect of the curriculum is chosen as being what someone has decided is suitable for that age range. (p. 44)
>
> It is pointless trying to adhere to a school-type curriculum if it means that the whole family is constantly in a state of anxiety about keeping to it. . . . Settle on the method and materials that suit the children best and the family's way of life. (p. 117)

Pride (1988), another home educator and author, also commented on the selection of curriculum materials: "We draw from one set of ideas or another as it suits us, adapting as we go along" (p. 136). She stated that she did not believe in forcing people to adopt any one educational system (p. 174) and that education should give your child an "eye on the world" (p. 172).

Home educators used a variety of different programs. The most commonly used programs identified by home educators in this study included the following: home-made programs, Alberta Distance Learning, A Beka, Bob Jones, Accelerated Christian Education, the Alberta Program of Studies, Alpha Omega, and Moore Canada. The A Beka, Bob Jones, and Accelerated Christian Education programs are religion-based programs that have been widely used by home educators in both the United States and Canada. Table 8 presents a summary of program usage and indicates the frequency distribution according to grade level and program. It is common for a student to be using more than one program within a particular grade; consequently, the sum of all the different programs used in Table 8 for a grade level may be greater than the number of actual students.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Programs Used by Home Educators

		HMP	ADL	AB	BJ	ACE	APS	AO	MC	OP
Grade	n	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f
K	23	13	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	6
1	29	15	1	6	2	0	1	5	1	6
2	33	11	2	6	5	1	3	2	0	7
3	22	6	1	8	3	0	1	4	1	2
4	23	6	1	5	1	0	2	0	0	7
5	22	10	2	5	6	1	0	1	0	2
6	16	3	1	6	2	0	1	1	0	3
7	14	5	4	2	1	0	1	0	1	1
8	11	5	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
9	16	3	4	2	6	0	0	0	0	1
10	5	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	8	2	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
12	4	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

Notes.
HMP Home-made programs
ADL Alberta Distance Learning
AB A Beka
BJ Bob Jones
ACE Accelerated Christian Education
APS Alberta Program of Studies
AO Alpha Omega
MC Moore Canada
OP Other programs

Table 9 presents a summary of information regarding program preferences of home educators. The table identifies the most frequently used programs, other programs that are used to supplement the basic programs, and those programs that are not used. According to Table 9 the most frequently used program is a home-made program, which is organized by the parent and might include resources from a wide variety of sources.

Table 9

Frequency of Program Use (n = 247)

	Most frequently used		Also used		Not used	
Program	f	%	f	%	f	%
Home-made program	80	32.4	41	16.6	126	51.0
Alberta Distance Learning	34	13.8	9	3.6	204	82.6
A Beka	49	19.8	36	14.6	162	65.6
Bob Jones	30	12.1	29	11.7	188	76.7
Accelerated Christian Education	4	1.6	3	1.2	240	97.2
Alberta Program of Studies	9	3.6	22	8.9	216	87.4
Alpha Omega	14	5.7	3	1.2	230	93.1
Moore Canada	10	4.0	7	2.8	230	93.1
Other program	41	16.6	38	15.4	168	68.0

The results indicate that 32.4% of home educators preferred to use a home-made program, that 16.6% of the participants also used this as a secondary program, and that 51% did not use home-made programs at all. The second most frequently used program was A Beka (19.8%). An additional 14.6% of the participants used this program as a secondary resource, and the remaining 65.6% did not use it at all. A complete table of the other programs used by home educators is located in Appendix C.

Research Question 3: What Are the Reasons Why Families Choose Home Education?

This section reports the reasons that parents provided for choosing to home-educate their children. The means of the responses and the ranks of the means for each statement from the questionnaire are presented. The frequency distribution of responses is also presented in rank order from most

important to least important. Some verbatim quotations are included to elaborate on additional comments of respondents.

This section of the parent questionnaire asked participants to rate the importance of 22 specific items as they related to the reasons that they chose to home-educate their children. The items for this portion of the parent questionnaire were collected from a variety of other surveys of home educators. The questionnaires of Dugas (1991) and Long (1993) were used most frequently as references. All items were worded to suit the nature of this particular study. Participants were asked to rate their choices on a 5-point Likert scale, where a score of 1 represented *least important* and a score of 5 represented *most important.*

The statements in Table 10 are organized in descending order of importance according to the means for each statement. The results show that the participants identified "to influence the child's moral environment" as the most important reason for home schooling (mean = 4.47). The second most important reason that parents chose to home-educate was "to make better use of the time spent on learning" (mean = 4.12). "To allow my child to develop a better self-concept" (mean = 4.07) was chosen as the third most important reason to home-educate, and the fourth most important reason was "to avoid negative influence of others on my child" (mean = 4.04).

Participants expressed their views regarding several items included in this section of the survey that were of little concern to them as home educators. The item "home education was recommended as a discipline action" (mean = 1.09) was not an issue with home educators. The monetary value attached to public school (mean = 1.43) or to private-school tuitions (mean = 1.73) was of minimal concern to home educators, as was "to help

Table 10

Reasons for Home Schooling (Descending Means; n = 119)

Reason	Mean	S.D.
To influence the child's moral environment	4.47	.98
To make better use of the time spent on learning	4.12	.93
To allow my child to develop a better self-concept	4.07	1.07
To avoid negative influence of others on my child	4.04	1.03
To influence the child's social environment	3.96	.92
To encourage self-discipline	3.95	.95
To enhance religious beliefs	3.94	1.33
To provide more parent-child contact	3.92	1.08
To address my child's learning needs	3.92	1.14
To provide individual instruction for my child	3.92	1.03
To reduce peer pressure for my child	3.89	1.03
To allow more time with family members	3.70	1.12
To have flexibility and freedom with the curriculum	3.66	1.25
To fulfil my belief that education is a parental responsibility	3.44	1.20
To reduce peer competition for my child	3.29	1.25
To remove my child from a classroom with a high student-teacher ratio	3.29	1.35
To have flexibility and freedom in our personal lives to travel	2.78	1.39
To reduce peer pressure for material things	2.74	1.25
To help my child cope with the classroom setting	2.01	1.40
To help my child cope with health concerns	1.81	1.20
To reduce the costs of private-school tuition	1.73	1.06
To reduce the costs of public school	1.43	.81
Home education was recommended as a discipline action	1.09	.55

my child cope with health concerns" (mean = 1.83). Appendix D presents the frequency for each of the 22 statements in descending order of importance to participants in this study.

The final item in this section of the parent questionnaire asked parents to specify other reasons why they chose to home-educate their children. Thirty-five participants provided 39 other reasons for their choices. The comments were grouped into themes that focused on addressing their children's needs, the enjoyment of working with their own children, the quality of education, their rights as parents, the suitability of content offered and the efficient use of time in the traditional school, and the role assumed by teachers in the children's lives.

The most frequent comment made regarding the reasons why parents chose to home-educate was that they were interested in meeting the individual needs of their children (10 of 39). Parent comments that expanded on this topic were:

> It helps me to be in touch with my child's needs physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and educationally.
>
> To encourage my children to be self-directed learners who can think and make wise decisions.

The second most frequent comment recorded was that parents enjoyed the experience of working directly with their children (7 of 39). The comments reported by parents elaborated on the reasons for wanting to work directly with their own children:

> I enjoy the satisfaction of seeing my children happy at home. Homework is never an add-on.
>
> I care about my children more than anyone else.

The third most frequent comment was that parents were concerned with the quality of public education (6 of 39). One respondent stated:

> As a top student, there was no longer a place for our child in an undisciplined classroom geared towards mediocrity.

Another parent commented:

> It was the only other alternative left that provided hope for positive results in educating our child academically, socially, and emotionally.

Six individual comments indicated that parents felt that it was their right to reclaim the role of the major teacher in their children's education.

One parent stated:

> It is my right to raise my children with God as #1 in their lives; the results will be . . . morals, discipline, and good character.

The same parent also stated:

> There should be less government interference into my rights as a parent.

Five of the 39 comments focused on the suitability of content offered to children in the traditional school setting and on the efficient use of time to present the required material to students in the regular classroom.

Comments on this subject included the following:

> To get my child out of those 'social-engineered' classes like sex education, the Care Kit, and the Quest Program.

> Home schooling will eliminate all the wasted time in travelling to and from school by bus and all the negative spin-offs from learning to waste time.

> I am concerned with the content of material used in public schools.

An additional five comments indicated a concern for the role that teachers assume in addressing the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and educational needs of their children. Individual comments included:

> There is a lack of concern and instruction by teachers.

> Teachers provide a poor role model to students.

> To counteract the emotional abuse in the classroom.

The list of individual comments can be found in Appendix E; they are grouped according to the six themes previously outlined.

Research Question 4: What Do Home Educators Identify as Needs Associated With Their Home Education Program?

The list of needs used for the purpose of this parent questionnaire was adapted from the questionnaires of Dugas (1991) and Long (1993), with input from several home education coordinators. The survey asked parents to identify their needs and, in particular, to identify the kind of assistance from school boards that would be helpful to them as home educators. Parents were also asked to include comments regarding needs that they might have as home educators that were not itemized in the parent questionnaire. Several parents took the opportunity to list their needs; 34 participants listed 43 additional comments. These were recorded and grouped into themes centering around needs associated with issues of moral support, curriculum support, assessment and monitoring procedures, parental rights, and funding support. Some verbatim quotations are included to elaborate on the different needs identified by parents.

The 18 statements that addressed the needs of home educators were listed, and the participants were asked to rank their responses using a Likert scale. The selection of a ranking of 1 on any item indicated that the particular item was identified as *least helpful,* and the selection of the number 5 indicated that the item was identified as a *most helpful* way for school jurisdictions to provide assistance to home educators. Parents identified four main areas where school boards could provide assistance to them as home educators. The most helpful item identified was "to have my child's progress monitored according to my own standards" (mean = 3.94).

The second item that participants identified which would assist them was "to have the opportunity to attend local workshops to enhance teaching methods in the home setting" (mean = 3.59). The third most helpful item ranked by home educators was "to have access to curriculum materials and learning resources" (mean = 3.58). The fourth kind of assistance identified by home educators was "to receive financial assistance for the purchase of resources and materials" (mean = 3.56).

Using the same scale, parents identified the following statements as being the least helpful to them as home educators. The statement ranked as *least helpful* was "to have my child's progress monitored by a provincial liaison (e.g., Alberta Distance Learning tutor)" (mean = 1.90). The second least helpful item was "to have my child's progress monitored according to provincial standards (Provincial Achievement Tests)" (mean = 2.08). The item "to have assessments and monitoring take place by telephone" was the third least helpful item for home educators, with a mean of 2.28. The fourth least helpful item that home educators identified was "to have my child's progress monitored by no one" (mean = 2.56). Each of the remaining statements appears in Table 11 in descending order of means.

Appendix F presents a list of the statements and the frequency distribution of the responses for each item.

When participants were asked to specify other concerns that they had regarding the assessment and monitoring procedures for home education programs, 14 individuals responded. Of the 14 responses, six indicated that parents alone should perform the assessment according to their own standards, and four indicated that assessments should be done by supportive individuals who were knowledgeable about home-school philosophies and standards. Three responses stated that assessment should

Table 11

Needs of Home Educators (Descending Means; n-119)

Needs	Mean	S.D.
To have my child's progress monitored according to my own standards	3.94	1.30
To have the opportunity to attend local workshops to enhance teaching methods in home settings	3.59	1.27
To have access to curriculum materials and learning resources	3.58	1.31
To receive financial assistance for the purchase of resources and materials	3.56	1.45
To have assessments and monitoring take place in person	3.38	1.43
To receive support from other home educators or certificated teachers in developing teaching units for home use	3.18	1.40
To have access to a school library	3.16	1.47
To have access to technical devices such as computers and modems	3.10	1.45
To be able to enrol my child in complementary courses (e.g., French, art, music, phys. ed.) in local schools	3.03	1.40
To have my child's progress monitored according to local standards (student portfolio, observation, etc.)	3.01	1.42
To be left alone, with no contact from provincial or local education officials	2.95	1.41
To be able to enrol my child in extracurricular and/or field-trip activities in local schools	2.65	1.41
To receive guidance on the selection of a curriculum for home education	2.63	1.41
To have my child's progress monitored by local designated liaison	2.61	1.42
To have my child's progress monitored by no one	2.56	1.71
To have assessments and monitoring take place by phone	2.28	1.30
To have my child's progress monitored according to provincial standards (Provincial Achievement Tests)	2.08	1.40
To have my child's progress monitored according to provincial liaison (e.g., Alberta Distance Learning tutor)	1.90	1.22

be done by mail-in-tests or fax/modem transmissions, and one respondent was unsure as to how home education students should be assessed or monitored.

The final item in this section of the parent questionnaire asked parents to identify other needs they had as home educators. There were 43 individual comments made by 34 participants in the survey. The comments were grouped into the following five themes: moral support, curriculum support, monitoring and/or assessment, parental rights, and funding support. Twelve of the 43 responses indicated that parents needed to feel supported and encouraged by school district personnel, local teachers, other home schooling families, and government agencies. Comments that expressed this need included the following:

> To be actively and willingly supported and encouraged by the school jurisdiction as well as the teachers and principal at the designated school.
>
> To have the government and local educators recognize the important contribution we are making to society.
>
> Supportive atmosphere at the school board level.

An additional 12 voiced a need for curriculum support from local educators and fellow home schoolers. One parent stated:

> There is difficulty in accessing scientific equipment and chemicals for experiments in physics and chemistry.

Another parent stated:

> To arrange a home-school resource center where home schoolers can trade or exchange materials and computer software would be very helpful.

A third group of comments focused on the theme of assessment and monitoring of home education programs. Eleven comments indicated that parents felt that assessments should be broader in focus and not based on provincial curriculum standards, that assessment should evaluate skills rather

than values and attitudes, and that monitoring of home education programs should be done by persons knowledgeable about home education practices. One parent stated:

> Assessment should be done by a supportive person who understands the philosophy of home schooling or perhaps schools their own children at home. Regular, certified public school teachers most often are not properly informed or experienced with home school families. Schooling at home is not making a home a school. The home simply is a place in which to learn.

Another respondent indicated:

> Monitors are frequently teachers who take home schoolers on as an extra. It is difficult to reach them as they are in class and cannot be interrupted when you need them. Our last monitor did not agree with home schooling at all and was actually very detrimental to myself and my confidence in what I was doing. He knew nothing about home schooling and didn't want to either.

An additional comment on monitoring home education students was:

> I would like to be monitored by a board elected and operated by active home schoolers.

A set of six responses focused on the rights of parents to home-educate their children. They indicated the need to be left alone to do what they felt was their natural right as parents. Two of the six comments identified external interference with their home school programs:

> The government should get their noses out of parents' business and raising families. They are having a hard enough time running the country, let alone meddling in home schooling.

> We feel that the role of the government should be *only* to give support, not to interfere with what parents want to do. We know our children, and we are committed to them and want what is best for them. We're not in this for the money or the fame. We would love to be left alone, yet recognized as capable and good educators.

The remaining two comments were not categorized in the previously identified themes. The comments expressed the need for adequate funding for home education programs from both government and local sources and a

need for a change in the tax system so that educational dollars would go directly to the parent to use as a voucher system for education.

In summary, the parents who chose to include additional comments on their questionnaires indicated that their greatest need was for both moral and curriculum support to ensure the success of their home education programs. The assessment and monitoring of their programs as well as the acknowledgement of parental rights and funding concerns were important issues to home educators. An itemized list of verbatim responses to other needs can be found in Appendix G.

Research Question 5: **What Is the Nature of the Services and Resources Currently Provided to Home Educators by School Districts?**

The answers to this question provide an indication of the availability of school-based services and resources for home educators. The data from the checklist in the survey are presented in Table 12. Percentages were used to report the availability of services and resources to home educators, the absence of particular services or resources, and home educators' awareness of which services and resources were available to them. It is important to acknowledge that 53.8% of the families answering this item were registered with willing nonresident school boards, and 40.3% were registered with their resident boards. The remaining 5.9% did not state where they were registered or whether, in fact, they were registered at all. It is possible for a family to live more than 300 kilometers from its supervising school board; consequently, the participants' perceptions of the extent to which certain services and resources were available to them as home educators might have been influenced by their distance from the supervising school district.

Table 12

Availability of School-Based Services and Resources Using Valid Percentages

Service/resource	Available	Not available	Don't know if available
Achievement testing	57.4	7.4	35.2
Textbooks, resources	52.3	23.9	23.9
Field trips	47.0	19.7	33.3
Immunization (health services)	44.9	14.0	41.1
Diagnostic and/or ability testing	38.7	8.5	52.8
School library	37.3	35.5	27.3
Sports programs	30.2	28.3	41.5
Special-needs testing	24.8	15.2	60.0
Career/guidance counselling	23.9	24.8	51.4
Computer & software programs	23.4	30.8	45.8
Fine arts performances	23.3	28.2	48.5
School gymnasium	22.2	41.7	36.1
Speech pathology	15.1	24.5	60.4

The results of the survey indicate that the most available resource was achievement testing (57.4%), the second was textbooks (52.3%), and the third was the option to attend field trips arranged by the school (47%). The resource that was least available to home schoolers was the use of the school gymnasium (22.2%), 41.7% stated that the gymnasium was not available, and 36.1% did not know whether the gymnasium was available. Fine arts performances (23.3%) and computer/software programs (23.4%) were the next two resources that were least available to children who were being home-schooled. Access to the school library was available for 37.3%

of the home educators participating in this study, it was not available to 35.5%, and 27.3% did not know whether the library was available to them. The participants also indicated that they did not know whether some of the resources or services were available to them as home educators. The responses in the *don't know if available* category ranged between 23.9% and 60.4%, indicating that many families did not know what resources and services were available. Possible explanations for this may be found in the large number of students registered with willing nonresident boards or in the fact that parents are unaware of services which they do not specifically use or need. The services and resources that were indicated by more than half of the participants as *don't know if available* were speech pathology (60.4%), special-needs testing (60%), diagnostic and/or ability testing (52.8%), and career/guidance counselling (51.4%).

The participants were asked to indicate whether they used the services and resources that were itemized in the questionnaire. The services that were used most frequently were immunization (health services) (43.6%), textbooks (43%), achievement testing (41.5%), and field trips (40.7%). The services that were used the least by home educators were special-needs testing (2.2%), speech pathology (5.6%), career/guidance counselling (9.9%), and the school gymnasium (15.1%). Table 13 presents the results of the question on the services and resources that respondents used.

Table 13

Use of School-Based Services and Resources Using Valid Percentages

Service/resource	Used	Not used
Immunization (health services)	43.6	56.4
Textbooks, resources	43.0	57.0
Achievement testing	41.5	57.4
Field trips	40.7	59.3
Sports programs	29.3	70.7
School library	25.8	74.2
Computer & software programs	25.0	75.0
Fine arts performances	24.1	75.9
Diagnostic and/or ability testing	18.9	81.1
School gymnasium	15.1	84.9
Career/guidance counselling	9.9	90.1
Speech pathology	5.6	94.4
Special-needs testing	2.2	97.8

Table 14 presents a list of the services and resources that home educators indicated were either required or not required by them in the operation of their home schooling programs. The two resources that participants indicated were *required* were textbooks (55.7%) and computer/software programs (54.8%). The two services that respondents indicated as *not required* were special needs testing (92.4%) and speech pathology (91.3%).

Table 14

Required School-Based Services and Resources Using Valid Percentages

Service/resource	Required	Not required
Textbooks, resources	55.7	44.3
Computer & software programs	54.8	45.2
Field trips	45.3	54.7
Immunization (health services)	42.9	57.1
School library	40.0	60.0
Sports programs	40.0	58.9
School gymnasium	38.5	61.5
Achievement testing	35.5	63.4
Fine arts performances	34.4	65.6
Career/guidance counselling	28.4	71.6
Diagnostic and/or ability testing	25.6	74.4
Speech pathology	8.7	91.3
Special-needs testing	7.6	92.4

Discussion

The availability of resources and services was a frequent point of discussion with home education parents, coordinators, and monitors during the researcher's field study. At a meeting of 55 new home educators in Calgary (March 1994), the following question was asked of established home educators: "How do you prepare resources for your program?" The six parents who answered the questions had been home-schooling for an average of three years. Some of the comments included the following:

> We go to the public library once a month and collect the materials we need.
>
> We do an overview of the entire year, and then we arrange the resources we need in advance. I usually plan a year ahead by asking other home schoolers for grade materials that they will not be using that year. We often borrow and copy some of the materials, especially if a particular unit of study was well prepared. We share a lot of resources, and we offer each other good advice on how to approach teaching some difficult units of study.
>
> I allow for a lot of flexibility in my program. I use materials and resources from everywhere, including friends who are teachers in the public system. Since we live almost 250 miles from the board, . . . it seems more economical to use local resources like friends and other home schoolers.
>
> We generally have an idea of the resources we will need in the spring before we attend the Alberta Home Education Association Convention in Red Deer, where you can find all the resources you will ever need. We save a little extra money throughout the year, and then we purchase all of our materials at the convention. At times we get some of our materials from the secondhand corner. Planning ahead keeps us organized.

Another meeting with eight home education monitors from the East Central Catholic School District in April 1994 revealed additional information on the issue of the availability of resources and facilities. Monitors stated that parents who registered their children with a willing nonresident board were less likely to have access to some of the services and resources because that district might be a great distance from the family's place of residence. Comments made regarding this issue were:

> Some parents ask for computer programs and the use of computers, but it is impossible for them to access these items when they live in Edmonton or Calgary, and our base is in Vermilion.
>
> I supervise students all across the province and would find it very difficult to transport all the materials they request, when I only see them two or three times a year. Our home-school office helps as much as it can with the loan of resources, but the distance from the supervising board can create a problem.

> Since some of our families live so far away we try our best to accommodate them. . . . We go to them; for example, we set up Provincial Achievement Testing centers across the Province. We arrange the testing sites close to the areas where the larger number of students live. By doing this, the students do not have to travel, and more of them write the exams.

The superintendent of this school district stated:

> We, of course, realize that distance is a big factor to some of our parents.

The Home Education Coordinator and the Superintendent of one school district stated that parents who register their children with resident boards know about the facilities and resources available to them because they live close to the schools that monitor their children's program. During interviews, both individuals stated that the principals were required to inform home educators about the availability of resources and facilities for their programs. One individual stated:

> The principal at the designated school determines what services at the school might be available to home educators. Some schools allow access to their libraries and computer labs, while others might arrange for gymnasium use or field trips. It is really up to the principal of the particular school involved.

The issue of resources and facilities for home educators was identified as a concern by all stakeholders. However, individuals commented that the situation was manageable:

> If the parents and the designated schools can work together, they will find a solution to sharing the resources.

> Parents and schools are already collaborating. I know of situations where the student attends the school for half of the subjects and is home-schooled for the rest. It will work if we keep an open mind to the benefits of working together.

Summary

This chapter presented the data obtained from the parent-questionnaire portion of the study. The data were presented as answers to the five research questions outlined in Chapter 1. In addition to the presentation of data from the questionnaire, information collected from parents, coordinators, and monitors was presented on the availability of resources and facilities for home educators. The latter information was collected and recorded during meetings with home educators, district monitors, and district coordinators of home education programs.

A profile of the home education family indicated that the majority of families lived in urban locations, were registered with willing nonresident school boards, and had 3.2 children. The mother was identified as the key educator in 80% of the families and in 54% of the cases these mothers had college or university training. Programs that home educators used for their children varied extensively. The two most common types of programs were home-made programs and religion-based programs. Parents indicated that the most important reason why they chose to home-educate was to have more influence on their children's moral environment. They also identified being allowed to assess their child's progress according to their own standards as their most immediate need. Parents were able to identify the availability of resources, facilities, and services provided to them and indicated whether they in fact used them and whether these amenities were in fact required. A more detailed analysis and discussion of this information is presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

INTERVIEW DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the interview portion of the study. The five research questions were used as the basis for discussion with the six participants. The research questions were introduced in Chapter 1 and are repeated in the order in which they will be discussed in this chapter.

The chapter focuses on the statements of the six participants interviewed for this study. The five research questions were addressed from three different perspectives: The first perspective was that of the senior administrator or superintendent of each of the two school jurisdictions represented in the study, the second perspective was that of the supervisor or coordinator of the home education program for each district, and the third perspective was that of the monitor or liaison of the home education program.

In both school districts the personnel from all three levels of management operated from the central or district office. The data presented reflect the three different levels of administration and their respective responsibilities for the planning and operation of the home education program within their systems. Quotations are included to elaborate on the different points addressed by the individuals in their interviews. The results are summarized and discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

Research Question 1: How Is Home Education Delivered in Your School District?

The two senior administrators discussed the delivery of home education programs within their respective districts. Both stated that it was very important to have a policy in place for the delivery of home education programs that reflected the guidelines and regulations issued by the Department of Education. They indicated that a coordinator or supervisor was hired to organize and coordinate the program. One superintendent stated:

> The responsibility of monitoring and setting up the program rests with the Supervisor of Learning Resources, so our supervisor coordinates the program. We have a senior liaison person who trains the liaison teachers, who are basically substitute teachers, to work with the families, and that is how it is handled. We reimburse the parents for the money that they spend if they are not on the Alberta Distance Learning Program (ADL). If they are on ADL, then their fees are paid directly to the ADL office. We have developed a handbook that lays out the procedures for the parents and sets the time lines and also the benefits or the services that they can expect. The liaison person actually works with the family by helping the family set up an educational plan early in the fall of the new school year.

In both districts it was the coordinator's responsibility to acquaint the monitors and the parents with the government regulations in the form of a handbook, to assign a monitor to each family, and to reimburse parents who had purchased programs or educational resources for their home school operation. One of the senior administrators emphasized the role of the monitor:

> It is the monitor's responsibility to do as much as possible to enable the parents to be successful in their programs.

The coordinators represented the second level of administration. One coordinator discussed the delivery of home education programs as taking place out of a business office that was staffed by office personnel and

facilitators. This participant commented on the importance of selecting a facilitator who would be a personal resource to the home educating family:

> We feel that a parent has the right to ask for a facilitator that they can deal with both philosophically and personally. We feel that the facilitator is a personal resource to the family.

The second coordinator stated that the first contact parents made was with the coordinator's office to secure information packages to assist with the delivery of their home education program. The coordinator would then assign a monitor to the family. The liaison was responsible for meeting with the parents once their decision to home-educate was made, to discuss the goals and objectives of the program, to assist with program planning and the selection of a curriculum, and to discuss the resources and materials available to them from the local school level. This individual also stated:

> Once the goals and objectives for the total program are decided, the monitor and the parent will discuss the extra things that the parent will be doing with the child. Some parents arrange for their child to take option types of subjects at the local school. Parents also decide whether they will rent the resources right from the school or perhaps get some of the resources free from our Learning Resource Service Center. We also set up the assessment monitoring visits, . . . usually two a year; that is, if the student does not have a history of academic problems, then we may contact them more than the three times that Alberta Education recommends.

Both coordinators indicated that each family would be monitored twice a year, in addition to the initial planning phase, unless there were academic problems or if the parents requested special assistance.

The third level of administration was asked to discuss the delivery of home education programs from their perspective. The individual representing this level is most often referred to as the *liaison, facilitator,* or *monitor.* School district personnel use these terms interchangeably in reference to the person or persons who are actively engaged in the

supervision and assessment of home education students. The term *monitor* will be used to refer to this individual in this document.

The two monitors chosen for this study were recommended by the coordinators of the program within the two school districts represented. The individuals were the senior monitors within each system and were considered to have the most experience with home schooling. One school division had 5 monitors supervising 172 students, and the other had 17 monitors supervising 1,530 students (Cannon, 1994).

One participant at this level commented that the role required the monitor to function within a ladder-like structure. This respondent viewed individuals in a descending order of importance, with the parents at the top, representing the most important individuals in the sequence. The monitors were seen as the second most important individuals, the office coordinators were third in command, and central office staff were at the bottom of the structure, having the least importance in the chain of command. The structure itself was seen as being rectangular rather than triangular in design. This monitor felt that a rectangular structure allowed for a larger number of individuals to be at the top level of command rather than just one individual, which is more common in triangular structures.

The second participant viewed the role of the monitor as part of a structure that was triangular in design, with the parents at the bottom of the triangular structure. This individual saw her role as a monitor, the middle person, determined by those individuals at the top of the triangle; namely, the superintendent and the coordinator of the program.

Both participants at the monitors' level discussed information regarding the procedures that parents were encouraged to use when registering their children with a school jurisdiction. They discussed the importance of

developing student objectives for learning and long-range plans for each student in each subject area. Assessment and supervision were discussed at the initial meeting with new home educators, and consensus was reached as to how this component of the home program would be conducted.

In discussion of this research question, it was evident that school district administrators saw themselves as having a responsibility to home educators, and each level of administration had a definite role in the delivery of home education programs. The role that superintendents dominated in the delivery of home education programs was to guarantee that government and department regulations were being met and that support personnel were in place for home education families. The coordinators were responsible for the entire operation, including the acknowledgement of parents' rights, assistance with curriculum choices, assignment of monitors, and allocation and provision of funds. The monitors were viewed by all levels of administration as the most integral link in the home education system. It was their role to provide service to parents and to be available for consultation and/or advice giving to parents upon request. All three levels of administration indicated that the type of services and resources provided to parents varied within the school districts.

Research Question 2: What Is the Nature of the Collaborative Relationship Between Home Educators and School District Personnel?

The second research question addressed the nature of the collaborative relationship between home educators and school district personnel. Both superintendents stated that a high level of collaboration existed between the home educating parents and the monitors of the home education program. The monitors were believed to be the most instrumental in helping the

parents establish a network with other home educators. The monitors provided the parents with the necessary information and support to enable them to be successful in their endeavors as home educators. Both senior administrators stated that it was very important to develop fair methods of assessment for the students. They stated that a great deal of collaboration was required to meet this expectation, especially when the individual needs of the child were being considered as a top priority.

One superintendent stated that distance was a major problem in determining the level of collaboration with many of the nonresident families. It was indicated that families did not utilize the system's facilities as a result of the distance that existed between the family and the school providing the service. Distance was not a concern for the district when monitoring its own, resident students.

According to one superintendent, the amount of collaboration that existed between the family and the system was a direct result of the involvement that the designated school wished to have with that family. This participant stated that it was up to the principal of the school to decide what services and facilities were available to the student on a home education program and that it was common for the levels of collaboration to vary substantially from school to school within the district.

Both senior administrators commented that collaboration regarding the assessment procedures was of paramount importance. Assessment was considered to have a double focus in both school districts: assessment through monitoring the child's progress on a routine basis, and assessment through administering provincial achievement tests. It was necessary for monitors and parents to work collaboratively in order to ensure fair assessment of each child in both aspects of this process.

Both districts were concerned that assessment instruments be consistent with Department of Education standards and expectations. One of the districts initially had regular classroom teachers develop assessment instruments specifically for those parents who chose not to use the Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs). Both school jurisdictions reported that most parents were agreeable to having their children write the provincial tests; however, one superintendent stated:

> There are alternatives to achievement testing that fit within the framework of the regulations. Some of our teachers are creating assessment instruments for parents who choose to use those in lieu of the provincial achievement tests.

One district arranged several test sites throughout the province in order to facilitate the administration of provincial achievement tests, whereas the other district encouraged home education students to write the provincially mandated tests at their local, designated schools.

In addition to the comments of both senior administrators regarding assessment, Horvath (1994), Alberta Education's Director of Student Evaluation, issued a letter to all school superintendents and principals regarding the administration of provincial achievement tests to home education students. He stated:

> Our goal is to account for all students in the province, regardless of where or how they are receiving instruction. We have been making good progress. In 1992, only 29 students receiving home-education programs wrote provincial achievement tests in grades 3, 6, or 9. In 1993, that number increased to over 257. We are continuing our efforts to work closely with the Alberta Home Education Association with regard to achieving our goal of accounting for all students in the province on home-education programs.

Horvath also commented about the concerns of home educators regarding the suitability of the tests for home-educated students. He stated:

> In January 1993, and again in December 1993, Student Evaluation Branch staff met with the executive of the Alberta Home Education Association to review upcoming assessments and to gauge the suitability of the tests for home-educated students. Some modifications were made without affecting the overall test design but which addressed concerns raised at these meetings. . . . These efforts result in tests that are more appropriate for home-educated students compared to tests from previous administrations, without compromising the quality of the tests for all students.

A final concern was addressed by Horvath. He indicated that some parents had reservations based on religious or moral concerns regarding the items included in the tests. He stated:

> In 1993, superintendents were asked to accommodate the preview of provincial tests by home-education parents with strong religious or moral concerns about what might be on a test. . . . We are supporting this request and asking that superintendents accommodate reasonable requests from home-education parents if they have strong religious or moral concerns about what might be on the test.

The second level of administration saw collaboration from another perspective. The coordinators of both districts commented that collaboration between themselves and the parents was very important. It was deemed necessary to keep the parents informed about changes to the home education regulations and to be as flexible and helpful as possible. Both coordinators stated that they had a good working relationship with the parents registered in their system and that service to their clients was a priority. The actual nature of the collaboration depended on the needs of the different families. One coordinator stated:

> We actually have some students who spend half of their time at the designated school and the other half of their time at home working on correspondence programs from Alberta Distance Learning. These students often do the option subjects at the school and the core subjects at home, so they can progress at their own speed.
>
> It is not uncommon to have some home education students deciding in collaboration with the liaison to work on one or two programs or one or two courses because they are working full

> time, they are single parents, they may be involved in other activities, such as stock car racing or modelling or whatever it happens to be, so they need that kind of flexibility.

The two coordinators stated that parents were generally very accepting of the recommendation that their children write the provincial achievement tests, and only under special conditions did parents request exemption for their children.

The monitors viewed collaboration from the perspective of being a help to all stakeholders and listed parents, other monitors from within their system, central office staff, and senior administration as their partners in the home education network. One monitor stated that the most important factor was truly to be of service to others in the program, especially the parents. The other monitor stated the following about collaboration with home educators:

> Each school is given the option of how much they want to do for parents. We encourage parents to use the school. Some parents will have nothing to do with the school, and others have a very good relationship with the school. I encourage involvement with the school so that teachers will become more knowledgeable about home schooling and especially so that teachers start to think of home education as a viable alternative to education. They also need to remember that it is a parent's right to choose this option.

In summary, the superintendents were inclined to view collaboration from a systemic level, with assessment procedures as a high priority. The distance between families and their supervising board had an impact on the type of collaboration that was possible. A high degree of collaboration was necessary within the school district that assigned home education students to designated schools; a close liaison between the parents and the school principal was necessary in order to secure the required resources and use of the available facilities. The coordinators and monitors were concerned with providing a service to home educators and to offer flexibility within the

program to ensure its success. All three levels of administration indicated that parents would ask for assistance when it was required and that parents were very explicit about the type of services they required.

Research Question 3: What Are the Key Indicators of a Successful Home Education Program?

Research question 3 addressed the matter of a successful home education program. The two factors that emerged as common indicators of success from all six participants were the level of satisfaction of the parents and the happiness of the child. The superintendents and the coordinators indicated that evaluative outcomes were a measurable indicator of a successful home education program, in that test results and portfolio assessments provided a tangible benchmark for the success or failure of individual students.

The two superintendents itemized indicators of success that paralleled one another. They indicated that parental feedback and trust in the system were important indicators and that student achievement and the demonstration of progress in a designated program were valuable indicators of success. The financial stability of the program was of concern to both districts; it was important that the program be self-supporting within the system and that the re-allocation of education dollars from other programs within the district was not needed to sustain the program. One superintendent stated that the way in which the designated school staff responded to the program was a measure of its success and was therefore an important indicator. The second superintendent commented that the reason that home educators were successful was that they worked with

small, core groups and were able to maintain the attention of the individual child for a longer time. This participant stated:

> Some of these home schoolers can teach us a thing or two about education. They use farm animals, art, drama, and travel to teach their children. The family group is a small, core group that works together in many different ways. In fact, they are less traditional at times than some of our schools. They never let schooling get in the way of their child's education. We often get caught in that old syndrome where we fear the unknown or something different. Success comes in many different packages.

One monitor stated that the top indicator of success was the commitment of the parent. This participant also made the following comment:

> The parent has to do what works best for the child. There has to be structure; planning is essential. You can be as creative as you like, but commitment to follow through with a plan is very important.

In summary, answers to this question identified the key indicators of a successful home education program from three levels of administration. The satisfaction of the parents and the happiness of the child were seen as the most visible indicators of success. In addition, assessment and evaluative outcomes were viewed as measurable indicators of success by all participants.

Research Question 4: What Are the Challenges Surrounding a Home Education Program?

All three levels of administration indicated that funding was a major challenge to home educators and to school districts within the province, especially since the change in the funding structure was put into effect. The participants were interviewed in the spring of 1995 after the new funding regulations for home education programs were released by the provincial government. The new regulation stated :

> Resident boards, willing non-resident boards, and accredited private schools will be eligible for a grant equal to 50% of the 1994/95 basic student grant for students regularly enrolled in public schools. (p. 13)

Five of the six participants indicated that the monitoring and assessment issue was a concern to home educators and to them. The new *Home Education Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b) stipulated that "students will be required to write the Alberta achievement tests when they are in the equivalent of grades 3, 6, and 9" (p. 9).

One superintendent commented on the monitoring and assessment issue:

> I think that there may still be home education parents who really resist their children writing the Provincial Achievement Tests, which is regulated by the province. We have difficulty enforcing that because if the children do not come to write, we really don't have any way of insisting that they do. It may come to a point where funding and the reimbursement to the parent for some of the fees will not be provided to them if they fail to write the achievement tests. After all, it is one of the regulations.

The other superintendent indicated that it was important to achieve a sense of balance and credibility with the Department of Education and to operate within the framework of the regulations. This individual made the following comments:

> We could not function as a system if we ignored the rules and regulations of the department. We try to operate within the framework of the regulations and to influence the regulations as much as possible in the developmental stages to help parents.
>
> We had to have a vision of how to help home educators, and we are achieving a balance by working together.

One superintendent indicated that the level of acceptance of home education programs by the regular teaching staff within the district was important, especially when teachers were being encouraged to share the common facilities and resources with home educating families. This individual made the following comment regarding the joint use of resources:

> I think that there may still be a little bit of resentment on the part of school staff at having to share the resources and facilities at their school with home education students. I think our school people felt rejected when greater numbers were electing to opt out of school in favor of home education programs. Many of our staff still feel that children benefit more from being in a regular classroom than being on home education. The great part is that there is a higher level of acceptance than there used to be.

The two monitors acknowledged that there were several challenges surrounding home education programs. The challenges identified by them were the following:

- Parents should be recognized for their efforts.
- Funding to parents should be more flexible.
- Guidelines should be established for willing nonresident boards to control the number of students they can supervise.
- Correspondence courses for elementary students should be revised and updated.
- Teachers need to be more accepting of home education students in the schools.
- The public need to be educated about home education programs.

In discussion of the challenges surrounding home education programs in the province, it appeared that the major issue identified was related to the funding regulations for home education students. One coordinator stated:

> I think that the amount of funding that the government is giving each home school child is appalling. Some of the programs that parents choose are very expensive; the grant is definitely not enough to cover their expenses. The basic instruction grant has been equalized at $3,686, and a home schooling student will receive only $990 at the school district level, of which $495 will be returned to the parent. Using basic mathematics, the instructional grant has been reduced to 25% of the original grant. I don't think that is fair to parents. They deserve as much financial support as the child in the classroom.

Another coordinator stated:

> The big challenge that I am aware of is the funding from Alberta Education. We get a grant of close to $1000 for each home school child. We tend to have between 50 and 60 children registering after the September 30th count. My major concern for 1995/96 is, how are we going to be able to provide a home education program for students that register after the count date of September 30th?

The second issue that presented a challenge to school district personnel was the acceptance of home education practices by other educators and the public in general. The following comments expressed this concern:

> I think it has taken about five years for people in the schools to really accept that home education is a viable alternative for parents and that they do have the right to choose that alternative.

> A major issue is the reality that parents have to be recognized and accepted for the great job they are doing with educating their children at home.

> I would like to see teachers in the classroom become more knowledgeable about home education. Right now some of them (teachers) have an attitude which does not speak well of home education. They seem to have this idea that children go on home schooling because the parents don't like the teachers or the system, which is often not the case.

Collaboration between school districts, department officials, home educators, and teachers was indicated as an important factor for easing the challenges for all involved with home education practices. One individual commented:

> An area that requires a great deal of improvement is the level of collaboration that is necessary for schools and parents in the sharing of resources and facilities. Parents have not been very demanding in the past, but that could change, with all the funding cuts to their program.

Research Question 5: How Should Home Education Students Be Assessed?

The final interview question dealt with the assessment of home education students. The three levels of administration had different views as to how home education students should be assessed and evaluated; however, all indicated that assessment was an important part of the home education program and that assessment should be done on an individual basis. All participants indicated that there were numerous ways in which children could be assessed and that care should be taken to address the individual program plans of the students involved.

The superintendents' comments regarding the assessment issue included the following:

- Provincial Achievement Tests should be used as a benchmark for satisfactory progress.
- The individual student's assessment should be consistent with the program plan set up by the parent and the monitor.
- Content-based tests should not be forced on children.
- Portfolios of the children and written assessments of the monitor should be considered as part of the overall evaluation.
- There should be less focus on norming through tests.

One superintendent stated:

> We have a responsibility to ensure that the assessment instruments that we use have been regularly updated based on the curriculum changes in order to give us a standardized way of measuring whether the children are meeting the goals of the program of studies. A day-to-day file and record system by the parent also provides us with valuable information regarding the assessment of the child.

The coordinators of the program indicated that parents should have a major role in the evaluation of their children and stressed the importance of using the recommended program of studies as a guide in the assessment

process. Both coordinators indicated the value of parental records, logs, diaries, and portfolios in the assessment process for elementary and junior high students. They also indicated that the assessment of students at the high school level was difficult because students required the formal evaluation of diploma examinations in order to qualify for entrance to university programs. One coordinator stated the following about high school student assessments:

> At the senior high school level I get a little bit more adamant. I believe that no parent has the right to deny their child an Alberta High School Diploma that will enable them to further their studies after high school. I believe that all students at the senior high level should have to take the diploma exams. The decision to further their education past Grade 12 should be the individual's choice anyway, not the parents' decision.

One superintendent stated:

> At the high school level we have had teachers in our schools preparing examinations for the home schoolers so that we could provide an actual exam for a Grade 12 student in the core subjects. When the student takes the exam our teachers can assign a school mark to that student in a particular subject area. The student is able to collect credits and becomes eligible to write the diploma exams. We do not force these exams on people; the exams are available as a choice to parents.

The monitors both indicated that assessment through formal tests was not necessary. They stated that an experienced monitor could tell just by sitting with the child whether the child was progressing with the program. Both monitors indicated that they had a way of knowing when a child was successful and when the child was having great difficulty with a concept. The following comments expressed their views regarding assessment:

> Assessment is not testing. The only form of assessment that should be taking place is that we [monitors] should be sitting with the child and the parent and coming to some sort of conclusion about their progress.

> As an experienced teacher you can just tell when a child is making progress. You get a distinct feeling; you know after looking at their daily assignments, reading the parent's log; you get a pretty

> good idea of the success or failure that they are experiencing as home educators. Once I see the evidence I can help direct the parent; that is, if they want direction.

All respondents were asked to provide additional comments regarding home education issues that were not addressed in the five formal interview questions. The two coordinators commented on the government funding guidelines and the difficulty they experienced in providing adequate funds to parents when the allocated dollars did not cover the cost of correspondence programs. The monitors commented on the need for more information for parents on the 'how-to' of teaching, because they both indicated that they did not think that it was their responsibility to teach parents how to teach. Both monitors commented on the commitment of parents to their children and the need to support and recognize their efforts as educators.

An additional comment by one coordinator focused on the formation of a new group of home educators called The Home Education Exchange (THEE). The operation of this group became possible with the change in legislation which permitted private schools to take over the functions of school boards for home schooling purposes. The following information appears in the brochure (THEE, 1994) circulated to members and prospective members of the group, with permission from the group's Director, Rus Hathaway:

> The Home Education Exchange is an independent "willing non-resident board," specifically created to be a home education support. It is directed by Rus Hathaway and provides services to over 80 families across Alberta from Elk Point to Cardston. The belief of T.H.E.E. is that learning is individual and best achieved in a caring environment, and that parents are ultimately responsible for the education of their children.
>
> The strength of T.H.E.E. is the network of parents, teachers and students, involved with home schooling.
>
> A computer bulletin board system named R.A.L.P.H. (Reading and Learning Productivity Hub) is provided province-wide, toll free for instant communication.

> Members of T.H.E.E. receive supervision, funding, and access to all the services, including R.A.L.P.H. (n.p.)

The coordinator who commented about the formation of this group was concerned that some parents might be drawn into membership in this program because the guidelines for home supervision and assessment had more options for parents than school districts were able to offer. The coordinator also stated that parents would welcome the internal network of support from other home schoolers. The assessment policy guidelines included the following:

- THEE uses local teachers as supervisors.
- THEE works with parents to find suitable supervisors that are interested in home education.
- THEE already has home-school supervisors established in many communities.
- Supervision involves three home visits per year, as well as administering the parents' choice of assessment: Canadian Test of Basic Skills or portfolio/program assessment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data obtained from the interview portion of the research, which focused on five research questions directed towards district personnel in two separate school jurisdictions. For the purpose of discussion, issues were addressed from three different levels of administration and management of home education programs. The first level represented the office of the superintendent, the second level included the home education coordinators for each district, and the third level represented the voice of the home education monitor within the two districts.

The data collected from the six interviews focused on the topics of home education delivery, the collaborative relationship of district personnel with home educators, the key indicators of a successful home education program, the challenges facing district office personnel, and student assessment. The

data were presented in the order that the research questions were introduced. Two males and four females were interviewed for this study. The interviews took place within the time frame of one week (April 3-7, 1995); all interviews were conducted after the release of the new *Home Education Regulation* by the Alberta Education (1994b).

The delivery of home education programs within the two districts was similar in that both districts were concerned with meeting provincial regulations, having support personnel in place for home educators, and having the financial resources to supplement the parents for the purchases of resources and materials for their programs. According to the many network meetings and workshops that the researcher attended over a two-year period with home educators throughout the province, this information parallels the nature of the delivery of home education programs throughout the province. Some differences were present within the administration of the programs that were associated with the different types of supervising boards; that is, willing nonresident boards and resident boards. The two districts represented in this study have one distinguishing difference in that one district was a willing nonresident board to students outside its jurisdiction, whereas the other board has chosen not to supervise any students outside its jurisdiction.

Collaborative efforts between district personnel and home educators were similar in many respects. Home education students were monitored using the same guidelines for program planning and home visitations in both jurisdictions. In both jurisdictions home education students were encouraged to comply with Department of Education standards by writing the Provincial Achievement Tests. The use of libraries, gymnasiums, textbooks, field trips, and other types of resources and facilities by home

educators were quite frequent in both districts even though some families were not able to access the resources as a result of the distance they lived from their supervising board. In both school districts a remuneration system was in place for parents who purchased educational materials and programs for their children; each district also covered the tuition costs of Alberta Distance Learning correspondence programs for students.

The key indicators of a successful home education program were readily identified by all six participants. The satisfaction of the parents and the happiness of the child were cited as the most visible indicators of a successful program. Another indicator identified by both superintendents was the measurable outcomes of Provincial Achievement Tests and other forms of achievement or standardized testing.

The challenges surrounding home education programs related to the allocation of funding to school districts and parents and the acceptance of the concept of home education by other educators and the public in general. Collaboration between the major stakeholders was cited as an important factor in reducing the number of challenges that existed between them. Both school districts made a concerted effort to assist parents with program planning and goal setting by providing a form of inservice training to new home educators.

All those interviewed considered assessment to be an important issue relating to home education. However, the way in which assessment should be carried out became an individual preference. Participants commented that assessments could be very formal or informal depending on the needs of the individuals involved. All participants felt that the way in which assessment guidelines and procedures were arranged for individual families required a collaborative effort between parents and school district personnel

in order to be consistent with provincial regulations. The assessment of high school students was viewed as providing less flexibility because these students required formal diploma evaluations for entry to colleges and university programs.

An overall summary statement by the participants interviewed for this study indicated that funding and public awareness were the major concerns for home education programs in the province. The funds allocated to school districts for home education programs were seen as insufficient for the self-supporting operation of the program; some aspects of the program required financial assistance from within the jurisdiction. Most of those interviewed suggested that the underlying philosophy of home education programs required greater public awareness in order to become an acceptable alternative to public education.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This chapter contains a summary of the study, the major findings of the study, a discussion of these findings in relation to the current literature, and consideration of the implications of the findings for practice and for future research. The detailed findings have been included in Chapters 4 and 5; therefore, the major findings and generalizations will be summarized in this chapter.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to identify the needs of parents who were home-educating their children. The study explored the reasons why parents chose to home-educate their children and the role that school boards and school district personnel took in assisting parents with the delivery of home education programs.

Significance of the Study

The study is considered to be significant for several reasons. First, the concept of home education is relatively new to Albertans and has had a short span of operation in the province. The growing number of home education students in the past few years provided a significant reason for this study. Second, provincial legislation treats home-based education as an alternative to public education rather than an exemption from attendance at public school. Third, the collaboration that is required between parents and

cooperating school districts was deemed as very important to the success of home education programs. Fourth, by examining individuals' comments at the different levels of involvement with home educators, it was noted that the acceptance of home education programs by other educational professionals and the public was important. Fifth, the changing roles of families, their rights as parents, and the shifting roles of schools in the education process of children were considered appropriate and practical.

The Methodology

The methodological approach in this study included a parent questionnaire, individual interviews, and researcher field work with home educators, monitors, and coordinators of home education programs. The interview process involved three different levels of administrators responsible for the planning and operation of home education programs within two school districts. The researcher's field work included several weeks of observation at school district office bases for home educators, attendance at network meetings for coordinators and monitors throughout the province, observation of home education students during regular assessment appointments with their assigned monitors, and participation at home education conventions and retreats at several locations across the province.

Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis involved the questionnaire data and the transcripts of the interviews. The questionnaire responses were analyzed to produce a descriptive statistical summary of responses for the different sections of the instrument. All open-ended-question response sections were summarized and categorized into common themes. Because all questionnaires were

returned to the researcher anonymously, it was not possible to verify with the study participants the themes that emerged. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed with respect to the five research questions. Each research question was considered individually, and common themes emerged that identified the perceptions and/or discrepancies of perceptions among the different levels of administration.

Findings and Conclusions

The findings and conclusions will be reviewed in two sections. The first section summarizes the data collected from the parent questionnaire and is guided by the five research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The second section reviews the results of the interviews of central office personnel and is guided by the five research questions designated for district personnel.

Section 1

Research question 1: **What is the profile of participation in home education?** The profile of participation in home education that resulted from the collection of data for this study included families with as many as nine children and as few as one. The largest number of children registered in home education programs were at the second grade level, with consistent numbers throughout the other elementary grades 1, 3, and 4. The lowest number of students enrolled in home education programs was at the senior high grade levels 10, 11, and 12. Of the 119 families responding to the questionnaire, the majority were registered with willing nonresident school boards. In 80% of the home educating families surveyed, the mother was the key teacher. The data indicated that at least 84% of these mothers

were high school graduates, and 54% of them had some college education beyond high school or a degree from a college or university. The most common place of residence for home educating families was in large cities with a population of 50,000 or more. It was reported that the most common occupations of home educating fathers was either professional or technical (50.4%) or self-employed (13.9%), and that the mother's main occupation was that of homemaker (74.1%) or self-employment (9.5%). The religious affiliations of home educating families were diverse; however, the most commonly cited religions were Christian, Evangelical, Protestant, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic. The majority of home educating families had a combined annual income of $35,000 to $49,999, with 36% reporting annual incomes in excess of $50,000. The results of these findings were consistent with the findings of Karnes (1992) and Schmidt (1989) that mothers were the key teachers even though the responsibility of teaching was shared by both parents, that the education of the parents was above average and their income was in the middle range, that home education families tended to be larger in size, and that a religion-affiliated curriculum was the most popular choice for home educators.

Also relevant to the findings of this study are Klicka's (1992, p. 163) comments. He stated that parents were waking up to the truth that their children were not disposable commodities that should be blindly turned over to day-care centers or institutions aimed at educating the masses. This is especially evident with the increasing number of students being registered in home education programs in the province of Alberta. The Grants Planning and Administrative Branch of Alberta Education (1994a) collected information from school districts throughout the province regarding the number of home schoolers. The September 1994 report indicated that

6,122 students were registered in home education programs. This number represents approximately 1% of the total student population in the province, with a 35% annual rate of increase in the last decade. The majority of students registered in home education programs at the time that the questionnaire was conducted were in the elementary grades; the lowest enrolments were at the senior levels of Grades 11 and 12. The data from the Alberta Education survey are consistent with the findings of this study.

Research question 2: **What kinds of programs do home education families use?** The programs that home educators used most extensively were home-made programs, A Beka, Bob Jones, and Alberta Distance Learning. The A Beka and Bob Jones programs are religion-based programs that parents secure from American sources. These programs are also available at the provincial Home Schoolers Convention (AHEA). In many instances home educators used a combination of several programs. Their choices varied from grade to grade, and it was not uncommon for one family to use a different program for each of their children. The *Home Education Regulation* (Alberta Education, 1994b) recommend that parents follow the Alberta Program of Studies; however, 87.4% of the parents surveyed indicated that they did not follow the Program of Studies and that they often chose programs that were designed and distributed by American educators. Consistent with this finding was a study by Klicka (1992) that listed Bob Jones, A Beka, and Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) as the most popular choices of programs for home educators in the United States.

Research question 3: **What are the reasons why families choose home education?** Participants in the study identified the following as the four most important reasons for choosing to home-educate their children. The most important reason, according to parents, was to have more influence on

their children's moral environment. The second was to make better use of the time spent on learning, the third was to allow their children to develop a better self-concept, and the fourth was to avoid the negative influence of others on their children. In agreement with the findings of this study on the reasons that parents choose to home-educate their children, Klicka (1992, p. 137) stated that one of the greatest benefits of home-school socialization was that the child could be protected from the negative socialization of public schools that is associated with peer pressure. Morgan and Rodriguez (1988) indicated that parents desired to shelter their children from the negative influences of other children and society.

When asked to cite the reasons that they chose to home-educate, other than those listed in the questionnaire, parents were most interested in meeting the individual needs of their children and in having the opportunity and enjoyment of working with them. The findings of this study are consistent with current research on the same topic. Canadian researchers, Priesnitz and Priesnitz (1990), stated that parents chose to home-educate in order to become involved with their children's education. The parents in Priesnitz's study identified concerns about peer pressure, lack of individual instruction, deficient stimulation, wanting to spend more time with young children, and the enjoyment of watching them grow.

In this study values and moral reasons were identified as the most important stimuli for parents choosing to home-educate their children. Priesnitz and Priesnitz's (1990) findings indicated that parents kept children out of regular schools for religious reasons and that parents felt that they were better able to teach their children the values and morals that were fundamental to them than the school system was. Klicka (1992) similarly stated that the removal of prayer and religion from daily routines caused a

devastating decline to public schools in the United States. He also commented that

> the moral crisis in the public schools is acute, and we as a nation are already reaping the consequences in the rise of violence, crime, sexual diseases, divorce, selfishness, various forms of paganism and the occult, and a growing rejection of God's absolute moral standards. (p. 69)

Of similar concern are the comments of home educator, Bendell (1987), who stated that violence in schools is often the result of large numbers of children being herded together with little regard for the feelings of the individual child or their feelings for each other. She felt that the nature of the school environment encouraged children to establish mutually exclusive groups which invited a pecking order that bred intolerance and would eventually perpetuate itself in society (p. 65).

Research question 4: **What do home educators identify as needs associated with their home education program?** The parents identified four areas associated with their most immediate needs as home educators. The first priority was to be allowed to assess their child's progress according to their own standards. The second need was to attend local workshops to enhance teaching methods in the home setting. The third need identified was to have access to curriculum materials and learning resources, and the fourth need was for financial assistance for the purchase of resources and materials. When asked to identify other needs not itemized in the survey, parents were able to identify needs that related to moral support, curriculum support, and having assessment and monitoring standards changed to suit their needs and the needs of their children. The research of Frost and Morris (1988) concurred with parents' pleas for assistance and support. The following three insights from their research parallel the findings of this study:

1. The home-school setting must be recognized as a viable alternative for achieving traditional school-related academic goals. This necessitates that public school administrators, as well as classroom teachers, be made aware of current and pertinent curricular programs and instructional methodology.

2. Public school administrators need to cooperate wholeheartedly and help home-schooled children and parents. There must be extended efforts made for involvement, especially in areas of curriculum and resource development, library and materials usage, testing and diagnostic work, and even extracurricular involvement.

3. A new emphasis on designing and improving instructional methods for home-schoolers needs to be encouraged. Public school administrators and home-schooling parents can begin a systematic analysis of individual students, studying their strengths and weaknesses. (p. 226)

Research question 5: **What is the nature of the services and resources currently provided to home educators by school districts?** The participants indicated that the two most available resources were achievement testing and textbooks. They also stated that the services and resources that they used most frequently were immunization (health services) and achievement testing. When asked which services and resources were required to assist them with their programs, the parents indicated that textbooks and computer/software programs were the most necessary items. They did not see a need for special-needs testing, speech pathology, or diagnostic and/or ability testing.

Services and resources are plentiful in most school districts; however, the distance that a family lives from the source of the facility or service may be a deterrent to its availability. Parents often commented that they were not always aware whether a particular resource or service was available for home use because they were registered with a school district that was too far away to access.

Section 2

Research question 1: How is home education delivered in school districts? The participants in the interview portion of this study represented two different school districts and three levels of administrative and managerial authority directly responsible for the planning and operation of home education programs within their respective systems. With regard to the delivery of programs, both districts closely adhered to the provincial regulations and guidelines for home education programs. Each level of administration had a specific responsibility towards home educators and a vested interest in the success of the program. The main difference between the two systems was the nature of the student clientele. One district served a large number of students who lived outside the districts' boundaries, and the other district administered only to students residing within the district boundaries. The delivery of the program in both circumstances was the same with respect to meeting provincial guidelines, having support personnel in place for home education monitoring and assessment, having financial resources available for the parents to access when purchasing resources and materials, and arranging for the availability or provision of support services upon request by a home educating family.

Research question 2: What is the nature of the collaborative relationship between home educators and school district personnel? The personnel interviewed from both districts maintained that a collaborative atmosphere existed between school district personnel and home educators with regard to the availability of support services and facilities. The senior administrators did not feel that much collaboration existed when regulations, guidelines, or funding decisions were made, because these decisions were generally made at the Department of Education or provincial government

levels, with limited input from parents. School district personnel felt that the monitors of the home education programs had the greatest opportunity to work in collaboration with parents on a consistent basis, aside from the assessment visitations which occurred twice a year.

Parent comments from the survey portion of the study indicated a greater need for moral and curriculum support as well as the support of other home educators. Several parents stated that a collaborative atmosphere did not really exist and that they felt quite isolated in their decision to home-educate. In some instances the parents felt that district personnel were collaborating with them for the explicit reason of drawing their children back into the school system. Researchers Frost and Morris (1988) elaborated on the importance of unbiased support of home educators and their children by public school administrators. Mayberry (1991) and Ramsay (1992) also agreed that school administrators benefit from creating a climate of mutual respect and cooperation with home educators.

Research question 3: **What are the key indicators of a successful home education program?** All participants readily identified the key indicators of a successful home education program. The two most common indicators were the happiness of the child and the satisfaction of the parents. The two superintendents felt that a measurable indicator of success was the outcomes of the Provincial Achievement Tests or other forms of achievement or standardized testing.

Research question 4: **What are the challenges surrounding a home education program?** The allocation of funding and the acceptance of home education practices by other educators and the public were considered to be the major challenges related to home education. Collaboration was cited as a method to reduce the number of challenges between home educators and

school district personnel. The research indicated a similar view regarding collaborative efforts: Mayberry (1989) stated that more cooperative attitudes on the part of home-based educators and school authorities would result in a more flexible approach to education.

Research question 5: How should home education students be assessed? Assessment guidelines and procedures were considered an important part of home education practices by all participants interviewed. The respondents indicated that assessment should be a matter of individual preference and that home educators and district personnel should work collaboratively to establish an acceptable format for the evaluation and assessment of the children involved. The two monitors were explicit in their discussion of assessment and indicated that parents should be the decision makers in determining how their children were assessed. The assessment of high school students was considered to be more difficult because these students required formal evaluations for diploma purposes and for entrance into colleges and universities.

The use of achievement tests and other forms of assessment is a controversial topic between school boards and home schoolers in both Canada and the United States. Klicka (1992) commented:

> Regardless of what you believe the limited academic value of standardized testing is, it is the best objective way to prove to the school district or the court that your home-schooled child is progressing. The legal advantage of test scores over portfolios or evaluations is that they cannot be subjected to arbitrary interpretation by the school officials or the judges. (p. 220)

School districts continue to recommend some form of standardized assessment even though some home educators are against the idea of subjecting their children to rigorous testing requirements. Bendell (1987),

author and home educator, discussed the assessment issue in her book about home-educating children. She stated:

> Formal testing of home educated children is particularly inappropriate: apart from anything else, it is not fair to test a child within the framework of a system which she has not been educated. . . . There may be rare circumstances in which the parents accept that formal testing is appropriate—though I would certainly resist it unless it seemed to be of positive benefit to the child concerned. (pp. 113-114)

Implications

The implications of the findings of this study are presented under two headings: implications for practice and implications for research.

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice among home educators and cooperating school districts emerged from this study. The major implication for practitioners is the realization that all vested stakeholders must work collaboratively in the delivery of home education programs.

1. The first implication for practice deals with the concern of parents to have the opportunity to assess their children's progress according to their own standards. The subject of evaluation, assessment, and/or testing has become a major issue with home educators, school administrators, and Department of Education officials. Consensus on this issue can be reached only when all stakeholders collaboratively communicate their philosophies regarding the testing policies currently in effect and reach a decision that is mutually beneficial to all parties. School boards have an obligation to meet provincially mandated education standards and are therefore required to impose certain evaluative criteria that will monitor and test the progress of children on home education programs. As was previously stated, Klicka

(1992) recommended that there was a definite advantage to standardized test scores over portfolio assessments.

2. Parents indicated that their most basic needs included having the moral, curricular, and collegial support of others actively involved in home schooling. The diverse nature of these needs indicate that school districts should pay more attention to communicating with parents and to how they can assist parents in establishing a network of support. The senior administration, the home education coordinator, and the home education monitor must be clear about their roles in assisting home educators and must be of unconditional assistance to parents in times of need.

3. The access to resources and facilities has been considered to be a problem for parents who have registered their children with a school board that is not the resident board. The distance that the family lives from the school or center that provides the resources to them may pose difficulties for some home schoolers in securing all the materials that they require for their program. It seems that provincial guidelines should encourage home schoolers to register their children with the resident school district in order to access the resources and facilities that are available to them as home educators. The regulations that guide the government subsidies for home education programs to school districts could be arranged so that benefits are realized by the home educating family when they are affiliated with their resident community and school district.

4. Recognizing the limitation of parents' teaching skills may be an important avenue for school district administration to investigate. Parents have indicated a need for curriculum support which should present itself as an opportunity for school district coordinators to establish parent-teacher inservice training opportunities for the home educators within their school

systems. The inservice training could be organized to capitalize on the unique skills and orientations of both home educators and school district professional staff. Through careful facilitation, the autonomy of either party will not be questioned or sacrificed by recognizing the individual skills and talents of both types of teachers in the community. The outcome of such a collaborative effort might conceivably envisage great gains in the area of increased public awareness and acceptance of home education programs.

5. The development of a public-awareness program that focuses on the positive aspects of home education has implications for all educators. Throughout the duration of this study, comments were made by educators indicating that home schoolers would eventually return to the public system of education. There appeared to be little regard for the commitment of home schoolers and their rights in choosing this option for their children. Researchers have also been aware that school authorities are often too critical of home school parents and the education that they provide their children (Frost & Morris, 1988; Klicka, 1992; Knowles, 1988). Consequently, the existence of a public-awareness program or propaganda that encouraged a positive attitude towards home education practices would do much to inspire the confidence of home educators.

Implications for Research

Educational researchers (e.g., Frost, 1988; Klicka, 1992; Priesnitz and Priesnitz, 1990; Ray, 1990; Shackelford & White, 1988; Van Galen & Pitman, 1991) have made major inroads into the study of home education in North America. Other researchers who have made contributions to the field of study are Holt (1981), Moore and Moore (1986), Pride (1993), and Topping (1986). However, in relation to the importance of this new

educational alternative, far more research is warranted, especially by Canadian educators and researchers.

This study highlighted the complexity of the home education scene and has exposed a number of expectations that are held by the different stakeholders involved in the operation and planning of home education programs. Because of the complexity of some issues related to home education practices, no individual study could address the many facets requiring investigation. The following recommendations are put forward as possible topics for future research involving home education practices, with particular significance for Alberta educators and for the practice of home education in general.

1. The study of the needs of home educators, the reasons that these parents chose to home-educate their children, and the role that school boards and district personnel have taken to assist home educators raised a number of implications that are discussed in this section. These implications appear to relate specifically to the collaboration of all levels of administration with home educators in providing parents with the necessary materials, resources, and support systems to be successful in their decision to home-educate. Parents indicated that curriculum and moral support were important to them. This is an area where additional study could be beneficial to educational practitioners.

2. There is much controversy surrounding the issues of monitoring, evaluation, and standardized testing of home education students. Because it is the responsibility of school districts to assure the Department of Education that home education students are being assessed according to the regulations specified by the department, it is necessary to develop a system of assessment that is acceptable to all stakeholders. The comments that

parents offered during the course of this study have indicated that it is very difficult to find a method of monitoring and assessment that is fair to them. Parents have indicated that they would prefer to do their own assessments and monitoring without the assistance of outside agencies. This issue warrants further investigation, and the results would be beneficial to practitioners in the field.

3. One of the premises of the *Goals of Education* (Alberta Education, 1989) is that achievement of the broader goals of education must be viewed as a shared responsibility of the community. The ultimate amount of learning occurs when the efforts and expectations of the different agencies that affect the child complement one another. It is possible that creating a cooperative environment will help rather than hinder the process of home education. As Common and MacMullen (1986) stated, "There is a need for increased tolerance by educators and for school boards to cooperate with home schoolers" (p. 7). The results of this study indicate that further research in this area is warranted.

4. Equally important to the need for cooperation is the need for policy makers to realize the value of serving alternative populations, including the growing number of home schoolers in the province of Alberta. Revisions to existing policy guidelines for home education programs in some school jurisdictions are the result of the combined efforts of home educators and local educators. Hopefully, this collaboration will alert public educators as well as home instructors to the variety of concerns surrounding home education programs, some of which might be the following: the criteria for approving home instruction, the process for reporting the progress of students, the procedures for evaluating, and the consequences for not meeting the progress standards. These concerns raise a host of policy

questions that have serious implications for both school jurisdictions and home educators and warrant further study.

Personal Reflections

The selection of the topic *Needs of Home Education Parents* is even more appropriate at the conclusion of this study than it was at its commencement. Current changes to the funding regulations and the requirement for provincially mandated achievement testing are foremost in the minds of both school district administrators and home educators. School districts continue to be responsible for the monitoring and supervision of home education students and are required to perform the same level of service with 50% of the funding. In order to facilitate these changes, they will have to reorganize and repriorize the way in which they can continue to provide the same high standard of support and service to home educating families.

Collaboration is a major component of the success of home education programs in the province. The parents indicated that they required both moral and curriculum support. They stated that they would like the opportunity to attend professional inservice sessions in order to improve their home teaching techniques and that they would like to be regarded as serious educators of their children. The parents were also interested in pooling curriculum materials with other educators in the likelihood of conserving financial resources. This level of support requires the collaboration of many educators. It may be necessary for school districts to devise a new and innovative method of sharing resources, facilities, and services in order to meet the needs of home educators as well as to balance their own budgets. It is conceivable that the teacher within the more

traditional school setting will be asked to assume the role of a consultant to parents who are seeking this type of support and to share the available resources with their home educating partners. Collaborative efforts of this nature might serve several purposes: to develop a more positive view of home education practices for traditional educators, to meet the needs of home educators, and to share rescurces and facilities. Positive interaction of educators with such diverse philosophies in education might encourage public awareness of the merits of home education practices as an alternative way to educate.

The future success of educational practices, whether a traditional or an alternate style, depends on the flexibility and the innovative ways in which educators choose to share the available resources and facilities.

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Appendix A

Letter to Parents and Parent Questionnaire

Dear Parents:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ruth Clendening, and I am a student at the University of Alberta. I am very interested in the concept of home education and have decided to choose this topic for my field research. Researchers on this subject have indicated how important it is to build partnerships between home educators and school jurisdictions in order to provide the best possible alternative for educating our children. Research in the form of collecting information becomes a very important way to assist you, the home educator, as well as local and provincial school jurisdictions, in making valuable decisions regarding educational planning.

This questionnaire was designed to collect information about the needs of parents who are actively involved in home-educating their children. Your answers are very important in helping others to understand the role of home educators, the needs that new home educators have, and the possible role that home educators would like local or provincial school jurisdictions to take in the future planning for home education.

Completing this questionnaire would be very much appreciated; however, your participation is completely voluntary. In compliance with the University of Alberta Ethics Committee guidelines, the results of this questionnaire will not identify individual respondents in any way. All responses will be treated with strict confidence, and anonymity will be preserved in the final reports that result from this study. The questionnaires will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Your comments are welcomed throughout the questionnaire. Please use the margins or the last page to record your opinions and concerns. If you are a single parent, please do not be offended by references to *father, mother,* and *spouse.*

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Ruth J. Clendening
Department of Educational Administration
University of Alberta

HOME EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Please answer the following questions about each of your children.

	Child 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
1) Age	____	____	____	____	____	____
2) Grade	____	____	____	____	____	____
3) Type of school (√)						
Home School	____	____	____	____	____	____
Public School	____	____	____	____	____	____
Private School	____	____	____	____	____	____
Post Secondary	____	____	____	____	____	____
Not in School	____	____	____	____	____	____
Other (Please specify)						
_____	____	____	____	____	____	____

4) For each child, indicate which of the following programs is **most frequently** used with a (1) and any **other programs** you use with a (2).

	Child 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Home Made Program	____	____	____	____	____	____
Alberta Distance Learning	____	____	____	____	____	____
A Beka	____	____	____	____	____	____
Bob Jones	____	____	____	____	____	____
ACE (Accelerated Christian Education)	____	____	____	____	____	____
Follow Alberta Program of Studies	____	____	____	____	____	____
Alpha Omega	____	____	____	____	____	____
Moore Canada	____	____	____	____	____	____
Other (Please specify)						
_____	____	____	____	____	____	____

5) For each child please (√) the key teacher involved.

	Child 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Mother	___	___	___	___	___	___
Father	___	___	___	___	___	___
Both Mother & Father (parents	___	___	___	___	___	___
Tutor	___	___	___	___	___	___
Other (Please specify)						
_____	___	___	___	___	___	___

B. Which of the following best describes the academic background of the key teachers of your home education program?

	Mother	Father	Tutor	Relative	Other
1. Less than 12 years of schooling.	___	___	___	___	___
2. High School Diploma.	___	___	___	___	___
3. Some College or University.	___	___	___	___	___
4. College or University degree (4 years after High School).	___	___	___	___	___
5. Alberta Teaching Certificate.	___	___	___	___	___
6. Other (please specify)	___	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___	___

C. Which of the following best describes your place of residence? (Please circle the number opposite the appropriate response.)

1. Large city (50,000 +).
2. Small city or suburb (10,000 - 49,999).
3. Town or village (2,500 - 9,999).
4. Rural centre (less than 2,500 in immediate area).
5. Farm, ranch.
6. Other e.g. military base, national park, etc.(please specify) _____
_____

D. 1. Which school jurisdiction are your children registered with this year?
_____

2. Is this the school jurisdiction which your children would attend, if they went to public school?
(Yes _____ No _____)

3. Not registered (please √)._____

E. What is your religious affiliation?

Father _____

Mother _____

F. What is the primary occupation of each parent?

Father # _____ Mother # _____

Choose from the following list:

1. Craft
2. Disabled
3. Farm/Ranch/Agriculture
4. Homemaker/Home Educator
5. Manager/Administrator
6. Professional/Technical
7. Retired
8. Sales/Clerical
9. Self-employed
10. Semi-skilled/Unskilled
11. Service
12. Student
13. Unemployed
14. Other (please specify) _____

G. Indicate your response to each of the following by circling the appropriate number.
Reasons for home schooling.

	Least Important				Most Important
1. To provide more parent-child contact.	1	2	3	4	5
2. To reduce peer pressure for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
3. To influence the child's social environment.	1	2	3	4	5
4. To influence the child's moral environment.	1	2	3	4	5
5. To reduce peer competition for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
6. To provide individualized instruction for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
7. To make better use of time spent on learning.	1	2	3	4	5
8. To have flexibility and freedom with the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
9. To have flexibility & freedom in our personal lives to travel, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
10 To enhance religious beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
11. To allow my child to develop a better self-concept.	1	2	3	4	5
12. To remove my child from a classroom with a high student/teacher ratio.	1	2	3	4	5
13. To address my child's learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5
14. To allow more time with family members.	1	2	3	4	5
15. To avoid negative influence of others on my child.	1	2	3	4	5
16. To encourage self-discipline.	1	2	3	4	5

	Least Important				Most Important
17. To fulfil my belief that education is a parental responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
18. To help my child cope with health concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
19. To reduce the costs of:					
• private school tuition	1	2	3	4	5
• public school costs	1	2	3	4	5
20. To reduce peer pressure for material things.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My child was unable to cope with the classroom setting.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Home education was recommended as a disciplinary action for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

H. In order to identify the needs of home educators, it is important to identify what kind of assistance would be helpful to receive from a school jurisdiction. Please circle the most appropriate number.

	Least Helpful				Most Helpful
1. To be able to enrol my child in complimentary courses(e.g. French, Art, Music, Phys Ed) in local schools.	1	2	3	4	5
2. To be able to enrol my child in extra-curricular and/or field trip activities in local schools.	1	2	3	4	5
3. To receive support from other home educators or certificated teachers in developing teaching units for home use.	1	2	3	4	5
4. To have access to a school library.	1	2	3	4	5
5. To have access to curriculum materials and learning resources.	1	2	3	4	5
6. To have access to technical devices such as computers and modems.	1	2	3	4	5
7. To receive guidance on the selection of a curriculum for home education.	1	2	3	4	5
8. To receive financial assistance for the purchase of resources and materials.	1	2	3	4	5

	Least Helpful				Most Helpful
9. To have the opportunity to attend local workshops to enhance teaching methods in home settings.	1	2	3	4	5
10. To be left alone, with no contact from provincial or local education officials.	1	2	3	4	5
11. To have my child's progress monitored by:					
• local designated liaison	1	2	3	4	5
• provincial liaison (e.g. Alta. Distance Learning tutor)	1	2	3	4	5
• no one	1	2	3	4	5
12. To have my child's progress monitored according to:					
• provincial standards(Prov. Achievement Tests)	1	2	3	4	5
• local standards (student portfolio, observation, etc)	1	2	3	4	5
• my own standards	1	2	3	4	5
13. Assessments and monitoring to take place:					
• by phone	1	2	3	4	5
• in person	1	2	3	4	5
• other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5
14. Other (please include additional comments or suggestions that identify your "NEEDS" as a home educator.					
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

1. The following school-based services and resources have been suggested as items of usefulness to home educators. Check (√) one category in each of the 3 columns for the following items.

		1			2		3	
		Avail-able	Not avail-able	Don't know if avail-able	Used	Not used	Req'd	Not Req'd
e.g.	School Newsletter	√			√			√
1.	School library							
2.	School gymnasium							
3.	Textbooks, resources							
4.	Computer & software programs							
5.	Career/guidance counselling							
6.	Immunization (Health Services)							
7.	Speech Pathology							
8.	Special Needs Testing							
9.	Achievement Testing							
10.	Diagnostic and/or Ability Testing							
11.	Sports programs							
12.	Fine Arts Performances							
13.	Field Trips							
14.	Other: _____							
	_____							
	_____							

J. Please list or describe other resources that are used in your home for your home education program. (i.e. computer, VCR, encyclopedia, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

K. Which of the following best describes the combined annual income of all wage earners in the family?

1. Under 10,000
2. 10,000 - 14,999
3. 15,000 - 19,999
4. 20,000 - 24,999
5. 25,000 - 34,999
6. 35,000 - 49,999
7. 50,000 - 74,999
8. 75,000 and over

Appendix B

Interview Questions for School District Personnel

Interview Questions

1. How is the home education program set up in your school jurisdiction?

2. What is the nature of the collaborative relationship between home educators and school district personnel in your school district?

3. In your opinion, what are the key indicators of a successful home education program?

4. Are there any major issues or challenges surrounding the home education program in your school district?

5. In your opinion, how should home education students be assessed?

In summary, are there any other issues or concerns that you wish to comment on regarding home education programs in general?

Appendix C

Types of Programs Used by Home Educators

Home Made Program

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	13	56.5	3	13.0
1	29	15	51.7	5	17.2
2	33	11	33.3	6	18.2
3	22	6	27.3	3	13.6
4	23	6	26.1	9	39.1
5	22	10	45.5	1	4.5
6	16	3	18.8	3	18.8
7	14	5	35.7	3	21.4
8	11	5	45.5	1	9.1
9	16	3	18.8	0	0.0
10	5	1	20.0	0	0.0
11	8	2	25.0	0	0.0
12	4	1	25.0	0	0.0

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	0	0.0	0	0.0
1	29	1	3.4	0	0.0
2	33	2	6.1	2	6.1
3	22	1	4.5	1	4.5
4	23	1	4.3	1	4.3
5	22	2	9.1	1	4.5
6	16	1	6.3	0	0.0
7	14	4	28.6	1	7.1
8	11	4	36.4	1	9.1
9	16	4	25.0	1	6.3
10	5	4	80.0	0	0.0
11	8	3	37.5	1	12.5
12	4	2	50.0	0	0.0

A Beka

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	2	8.7	3	13.0
1	29	6	20.7	3	10.3
2	33	6	18.2	2	6.1
3	22	8	36.4	3	13.6
4	23	5	21.7	5	21.7
5	22	5	22.7	4	18.2
6	16	6	37.5	0	0.0
7	14	2	14.3	2	14.3
8	11	2	18.2	2	18.2
9	16	2	12.5	3	18.8
10	5	0	0.0	1	20.0
11	8	1	12.5	1	12.5
12	4	1	25.0	0	0.0

Bob Jones

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	2	8.7	0	0.0
1	29	2	6.9	1	3.4
2	33	5	15.2	0	0.0
3	22	3	13.6	1	4.5
4	23	1	4.3	2	8.7
5	22	6	27.3	3	13.6
6	16	2	12.5	3	18.8
7	14	1	7.1	2	14.3
8	11	0	0.0	1	9.1
9	16	6	37.5	4	25.0
10	5	0	0.0	1	20.0
11	8	2	25.0	1	12.5
12	4	1	25.0	0	0.0

Accelerated Christian Education

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	0	0.0	0	0.0
1	29	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	33	1	3.0	0	0.0
3	22	0	0.0	0	0.0
4	23	0	0.0	2	8.7
5	22	1	4.5	0	0.0
6	16	0	0.0	0	0.0
7	14	0	0.0	1	6.7
8	11	1	9.1	0	0.0
9	16	0	0.0	0	0.0
10	5	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	8	1	12.5	0	0.0
12	4	0	0.0	0	0.0

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	0	0.0	1	4.3
1	29	1	3.4	3	10.3
2	33	3	9.1	3	9.1
3	22	1	4.5	3	13.6
4	23	2	8.7	3	13.0
5	22	0	0.0	4	15.0
6	16	1	6.3	0	0.0
7	14	1	7.1	2	14.3
8	11	0	0.0	1	9.1
9	16	0	0.0	2	12.5
10	5	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	8	0	0.0	0	0.0
12	4	0	0.0	0	0.0

Alpha Omega

Grade	n	most frequently used f	%	also used f	%
K	23	1	4.3	0	0.0
1	29	5	17.2	0	0.0
2	33	2	6.1	0	0.0
3	22	4	18.2	0	0.0
4	23	0	0.0	2	8.7
5	22	0	4.5	0	0.0
6	16	1	6.3	0	0.0
7	14	1	0.0	0	0.0
8	11	0	0.0	1	9.1
9	16	0	0.0	0	0.0
10	5	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	8	0	0.0	0	0.0
12	4	0	0.0	0	0.0

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	0	0.0	1	4.3
1	29	1	3.4	0	0.0
2	33	0	0.0	2	6.1
3	22	1	4.5	2	9.1
4	23	0	0.0	0	0.0
5	22	0	0.0	0	0.0
6	16	0	0.0	0	0.0
7	14	1	7.1	0	0.0
8	11	0	0.0	1	9.1
9	16	0	0.0	1	6.3
10	5	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	8	0	0.0	0	0.0
12	4	0	0.0	0	0.0

Other Programs

		most frequently used		also used	
Grade	n	f	%	f	%
K	23	6	26.1	6	26.1
1	29	6	20.1	6	20.1
2	33	7	21.2	5	15.2
3	22	2	9.1	6	27.3
4	23	7	30.4	3	13.0
5	22	2	9.1	1	4.5
6	16	3	18.8	4	25.0
7	14	1	7.1	3	21.4
8	11	1	9.1	1	9.1
9	16	1	6.3	4	25.0
10	5	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	8	0	0.0	1	12.5
12	4	0	0.0	0	0.0

Appendix D

Reasons for Home Schooling:

Frequency Distribution

Reasons for Home Schooling
(Frequency Distribution)

	Least Important				Most Important
	1	2	3	4	5
To influence the child's moral environment	3	4	12	15	84
To make better use of the time spent on learning	1	4	26	36	51
To allow my child to develop a better self-concept	6	3	18	41	50
To avoid negative influence of others on my child	4	5	20	41	47
To influence the child's social environment	2	5	25	50	36
To encourage self-discipline	0	9	29	39	41
To enhance religious beliefs	12	5	20	21	59
To provide more parent-child contact	4	10	19	42	42
To address my child's learning needs	6	10	16	43	44
To provide individual instruction for my child	3	7	28	39	41
To reduce peer pressure for my child	3	8	27	40	39
To allow more time with family members	5	13	26	40	33
To have flexibility and freedom with the curriculum	9	14	23	35	38
To fulfil my belief that education is a parental responsibility	8	19	31	33	27
To reduce peer competition for my child	12	20	31	32	23
To remove my child from a classroom with a high Student/Teacher Ratio	16	17	32	23	30
To have flexibility and freedom in our personal lives to travel	32	17	30	23	16
To reduce peer pressure for material things	26	23	32	27	9
My child was unable to cope with the classroom setting	64	14	12	10	11
To help my child cope with health concerns	69	22	11	9	6
To reduce the costs of private school tuition	69	20	17	6	3
To reduce the costs of public school costs	80	17	10	2	1
Home Education was recommended as a discipline action	107	2	0	0	2

Appendix E

Reasons for Home Schooling:

Individual Comments

Addressing the Child's Needs

- Helps me to be in touch with my child's needs physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and educationally
- Address my children's emotional - character needs
- So the kids would become a TEAM and support each other
- To build character in my child
- ADHD
- Learning disability
- Allergies - environmental illness
- Child unable to cope with classroom
- Child unable to cope due to health concerns
- To encourage my children to be self-directed, learners who can THINK and make wise decisions

Enjoyment

- I love teaching my own children, especially my creative ideas that a classroom can't do
- Enjoy my children fuller; more rounded approach to learning
- Enjoy it
- I enjoy it
- Because I care about my children more than anyone else
- I know what is best for my children and what my children enjoy
- Enjoy the satisfaction of seeing my children happy at home, homework is never an add-on

Quality of Education

- Quality of education
- As a top student, there was no longer a place for our child in an undisciplined classroom geared towards mediocrity
- Higher quality of education, half the time
- Only alternative which provided hope for positive results in education
- Standards of public education too low in core subjects
- To teach my children that learning is a lifelong activity; to teach them how to learn

My Right as a Parent

- To exercise my right to determine my child's education
- It is my responsibility to raise them up in the Lord's way; to know God
- The Lord told me specifically to bring two of my children home - SO OBEDIENCE
- To raise my children with God as # 1 in their lives; results will be morals, discipline, and good character
- Parental involvement in individual educational process
- Less government interference into my rights as a parent

Suitability of Content and the Efficient Use of Time

- Get her out of "social engineering" brainwashing classes, i.e. sex education, Care Kit, Quest
- Concerned with content of material used in public schools
- Public sex education program
- Home schooling will eliminate all the waste time in travelling and all the negative spinoffs from learning to waste time
- Boredom in the classroom

Role of the Teacher

- Encouragement (by teachers) for my children to resist my authority (when I disagreed with teachers)
- Lack of concern and instruction by teachers
- Poor role model from teachers
- Counteract emotional abuse in classroom
- The thought of doing "joe-jobs" in school for an unprepared teacher in order to be an involved parent and know what is going on in school did not appeal to me

Appendix F

Needs of Home Educators:

Frequency Distribution

Needs of Home Educators
(Frequency Distribution)

	Least Helpful				Most Helpful
	1	2	3	4	5
To have my child's progress monitored according to my own standards	10	6	16	25	51
To have the opportunity to attend local workshops to enhance teaching methods in home settings	11	13	23	36	34
To have access to curriculum materials and learning resources	11	16	21	34	36
To receive financial assistance for the purchase of resources and materials	18	10	22	23	44
Assessments and monitoring to take place in person	21	4	27	27	30
To receive support from other home educators or certificated teachers in developing teaching units for home use	21	15	26	28	25
To have access to a school library	24	16	21	27	28
To have access to technical devices such as computers and modems	24	16	25	24	26
To be able to enrol my child in complimentary courses (e.g. French, Art, Music, Phys Ed) in local schools	25	15	28	27	21
To have my child's progress monitored according to local standards (student portfolio, observation, etc.)	25	14	22	29	18
To be left alone, with no contact from provincial or local education officials	23	22	34	10	26
To be able to enrol my child in extra-curricular and/or field trip activities in local schools	36	19	26	20	15
To receive guidance on the selection of a curriculum for home education	38	17	25	24	13
To have my child's progress monitored by local designated liaison	36	20	24	18	15
To have my child's progress monitored by no one	49	9	8	12	25
Assessments and monitoring to take place by phone	40	16	29	6	9
To have my child's progress monitored according to provincial standards (Provincial Achievement Tests)	59	13	13	14	9
To have my child's progress monitored according to provincial liaison (e.g. Alberta Distance Learning tutor)	56	24	13	4	8

Appendix G

Verbatim Responses on Other Needs as Home Educators

(See Appendix A, Section H, #14)

Moral Support

- To be actively and willingly supported and encouraged by the school jurisdiction as well as the principal and teachers of the designated schools
- Emotional and personal support, rather than criticism (That's why I chose to notify with Vermilion)
- Someone to advise me to answer questions who is a qualified teacher
- Supportive atmosphere at the school board level
- Moral support/encouragement from other home schoolers
- Moral support for our decision to do home education
- Community meeting place for home educators/children
- Local home schooling support group with family oriented social outings, sports, field trips, art classes, etc.
- Special teams for home schoolers ... basketball, volleyball, track
- To have the choice to have the continued support and guidance of a specific liaison teacher
- Good understanding of home school philosophy
- To have the government recognize the important contribution we are making to society as a whole

Curriculum Support

- To register locally and be allowed to use our own curriculum
- Flexibility in curriculum guidelines (when certain chemicals are used in Chemistry, Physics, and Biology the course becomes out of the question for someone who has allergies)
- More up to date books
- Provide forum to trade/exchange materials
- Difficulty in accessing scientific equipment and chemicals for experiments in Physics and Chemistry
- To have extra-curricular activities and video tapes funded by County
- Curriculum rating or guide
- Software library
- Home school resource center
- Seminars put on by others who have same value system as ours (AHEA)
- Co-operation from Alberta Distance Learning
- Help in curriculum based on parent knowledge not school exams

Monitoring/Assessment

- Child's progress monitored according to non-curriculum based testing
- Monitors are frequently teachers who take home schoolers on as an extra. Difficult to reach them as they are in class and can't be interrupted when you need them. Our last monitor did not agree with home schooling at all and was actually very detrimental to myself and my confidence in what I was doing. He knew nothing about it and didn't want to either.
- I would like to be monitored by a board elected and operated by home schoolers.
- Home education standards for evaluation of progress (these would be developed from studies of children's learning in home education programs and be broader in focus).
- A form of general testing not based on Alberta Government Curriculum
- Achievement tests based on curriculum
- Assessment by a supportive person who understands the philosophy of home schooling or perhaps schools their own children at home. Regular certified public school teachers most often are not properly informed or experienced with home schooling families. Schooling at home is not making a home a school. The home simply is a place in which to learn.
- Standardised testing for academic skills only; not for values and attitudes as in current P.A.T.'s
- Entrance exams for higher education, not diploma entry
- Achievement tests based on skills/comprehension
- Provide diagnostic tools (Canadian QIET tests)

Leave Me Alone

- Freedom of choice
- We want to maintain the right to educate our children as we see fit, believing we are the best judge of that.
- Let me do my own thing, I know what's best for my children.
- Home schooling should be an option for educating not a "paid for" privilege.
- For the government to get their noses out of parents' business and raising families. They are having a hard enough time trying to run the country let alone meddle in home schooling.
- We feel the role of government should be only to give support, not to interfere with what parents want to do. We know our children, and we are committed to them and want the best for them. We're not in this for money or fame. We would love to be just left alone - and yet recognized as capable of being good educators.

Funding Support

- Better funding
- A change in our tax system so that dollars are credited to parents for the education they choose without ever going to the government in the first place. A voucher system for education.